

# Grassroots Development

Journal of the Inter-American Foundation

40<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

VOLUME 30

NUMBER 1

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The Inter-American Foundation (IAF), an independent foreign assistance agency of the United States government, was created in 1969 to promote self-help development by awarding grants directly to organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its operating budget consists of congressional appropriations and funds derived through the Social Progress Trust Fund.

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The purpose of this journal is to share grassroots development experiences with a variety of readers. The editor encourages submissions on relevant topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- how the poor in Latin America and the Caribbean organize and work to improve their lives;
- issues and trends in the development community;
- how institutions cooperate to further the development of the region.

Please direct query letters to Paula Durbin at the above address or e-mail [pdurbin@iaf.gov](mailto:pdurbin@iaf.gov).

Cover: Dried sisal for delivery to the plant of Associação dos Pequenos Agricultores do Município de Valente (APAEB), a former IAF grantee with a multi-faceted enterprise and community program in the Brazilian Northeast. Opposite page: Harvested sisal. Both photos: Sean Sprague.

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# Letters from Our Readers



I was very pleased to read about community-based recycling initiatives in *Grassroots Development* 2008 and I would like to contribute to this debate on changing the paradigm toward more sustainable communities.

The University of Victoria in Canada together with several partner organizations in Brazil (University of São Paulo, Rede Mulher de Educação, Forum Recicla São Paulo, among others) is helping recycling co-ops

and associations in metropolitan São Paulo to increase their effectiveness, safety and income-generation. Our Participatory Sustainable Waste Management (PSWM) project works with the groups and representatives from the government on organizational structure, networking capacity and public awareness. Activities are directed toward

- collective marketing, which helps boost income;
- inclusive waste management policies, compensating recyclers for recovering resources;
- adding value to recyclables, for example in the production of clothesline from soft-drink bottles;
- the creation of a microcredit fund to provide working capital for marketing transactions; and
- a video that gives the recyclers a voice in decisions on public policy.

Through workshops, field visits, presentations, participation in conferences, Web content, educational material and documentaries, the PSWM project

informs the public that solid waste can be both hazardous and beneficial to the environment as well as lucrative. We spread the word that public-private partnerships in waste management are win-win solutions and that it is smart to tackle social and environmental problems with inclusive waste management.

It is impressive to see the development of human resources through capacity-building and training. Change in policy design is possible when knowledge becomes accessible and is applied by those who are affected by the outcome. Lessons from the project in Brazil are shared with communities in Canada. Many students in Brazil and Canada are



Jutta Gutberlet

Door-to-door collection in Vila Popular, Diadema, by Vida Limpa.

involved in activities and in advancing the knowledge to be applied by the participants. The project has received funds through the Canadian International Development Agency's University Partnership for Cooperation and Development Program and the International Development Research Centre in Canada. For more information, e-mail [jutttag@uvic.ca](mailto:jutttag@uvic.ca) or visit <http://cbrl.uvic.ca>.

**Jutta Gutberlet**

Coordinator, Community-based Research Laboratory  
Department of Geography  
University of Victoria  
Canada

We are honored by your retrospective on the achievements and challenges of the last 22 years of the work of CIDAC and ARTECAMPO.

Those of us who experience Bolivia's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural reality and live and work beside the people in the countryside everyday no longer give much importance to whether someone is *chiquitano* or *guarayo*; we simply respect their customs and particularities. But we know that in the outside world, emphasizing the origin of the people we work with, even of the professional staff, is very important because it accentuates the values of tolerance and the ability to live together in racial harmony.

We thought your question was very interesting: "Will Santa Cruz society open its eyes, its hearts and its wallets to the beauty produced by the artisans of many ethnic groups and rural communities?" The answer is found by visiting middle-class families and seeing that our handicrafts are decorating their homes and that they prefer the products of our artisans as gifts to people outside the country. They are gifts that transmit pride in the culture of eastern Bolivia and in the quality of our work. The demand for our products is greater than the supply, even though we don't invest in marketing and copies of our products are cheaper.



Courtesy CIDAC

Another question you ask is "whether ARTECAMPO and its marketing program can become self-sufficient" and you express the possibility that this may not happen. We are not only optimistic, we are sure that it will. If we achieved self-sufficiency for ARTECAMPO sales outlets, why wouldn't we do so for its programming? We are well aware that it is a process that still requires resources, time and patience. But if we've been able to help women who barely read and write to handle their own accounting, if the beauty of their handicrafts conforms to the aesthetic canons of the modern world....

These are just some spontaneous reflections on your lovely article.

**Zofia Cywinska**

Accountant  
CIDAC/ARTECAMPO  
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

We welcome your reactions to the articles published in *Grassroots Development*. We also encourage organizations and publishers to submit new resources for review. The Inter-American Foundation is pleased to provide subscriptions to *Grassroots Development* free of charge. We request you inform us immediately when your address has changed by e-mailing [info@iaf.gov](mailto:info@iaf.gov).

*IAF awards in 1989 and 1996 helped APAEB transform its sisal business and, most dramatically, living conditions in Brazil's nordeste.*



*Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

On Dec. 30, 1969, the United States Congress approved legislation creating the Inter-American Foundation. At a time when few considered the poor a potential force in development, a brand new U.S. government agency was charged with blazing a trail through uncharted territory: the burgeoning complex of grassroots groups and non-governmental organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. The IAF's enabling statute, codified at 22 U.S.C. §290f, is striking for its brevity and its emphasis on outcome over process. As IAF's founding president William Dyal pointed out, "When the IAF began operating, there was no road map to follow because there were no clear-cut roads."

In hindsight though, leaving the IAF's pursuit of its ambitious goals to dictate the details seems almost prescient. During his decade at the helm, Bill Dyal built the IAF from scratch and did it his way. At every milestone the IAF has marked, this crucial and unerring guidance has been celebrated, and we celebrate it again here. Dyal believed that development funding should be responsive to people's needs, that the best solutions are often community-based, that small grants can make a big difference, that insights gleaned should be disseminated. In 1980, a year after Dyal's departure from the IAF, Congress made those and others of his signature principles a mandate for grassroots development—in Africa. The African Development Foundation Act, codified at 22 U.S.C. §290h, refers to the IAF's "successful approach to development," explicitly calls for a new foundation in the IAF's image, adapted to Africa, and incorporates a "road map" clearly founded on Dyal's ideals.

*Grassroots Development 2009* commemorates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Foreign Assistance Act of

1969 and a vision that IAF's grantees have repeatedly validated. These organizations have themselves proved trailblazers. This issue's four profiles of some of the most impressive were drawn from each of the four decades of IAF's work. Our other features are liberally sprinkled with additional examples. Note as well that some of our authors have blazed trails of their own—David Bray through community-managed forest enterprises, Kevin Healy through the rich resources for development offered by indigenous cultures and Marion Ritchey Vance through the tricky area of assessing the full impact of funding invested at the grassroots.

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our enabling legislation will soon trigger other 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, notably that of our first award in November 1971. When the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that event was celebrated in 1991, the IAF, with a staff of 73 and a budget of just over \$37 million, was one of the smallest federal agencies. Even smaller today, with a budget of \$29 million and a staff of just 47, we have nonetheless kept up the pace of funding. For those who care to put numbers on the past 40 years, by the close of our fiscal 2009 cycle, we will have awarded some 4,850 grants, worth nearly \$650 million.

The numbers, of course, don't show how IAF grantees have, with these modest awards, changed people's lives. It has fallen to this journal to tell the stories of the creative ideas, hard work and escalating ambitions that have often produced results well after IAF's funding has ceased. These narratives explain why the grassroots approach, tested over 40 years, is considered the most effective way of delivering foreign assistance. Simply put, it has worked.



# What Big Development Thinkers Ignore: 40 Years of Getting Ahead Collectively

*By David Barton Bray*

**T**he recent destabilization of the global economy makes it more urgent than ever to find cost-efficient and effective methods that reduce poverty. The sudden and relative impoverishment of the West, hopefully to be mitigated over the next few years, should not divert attention from the much more desperate situation of “the Rest.” These include the percentage of Latin Americans living on less than \$2 a day. While their numbers declined somewhat, from 26.2 percent to 22.2 percent, during the boom of the 1990s and most of this decade that reduced poverty worldwide (most dramatically for some 400 million Chinese), that improvement is likely to be erased due to the current crisis. This follows a pattern of alternating progress and setbacks dating back to the 1980s in Latin America, but with the absolute number of poor always increasing. What the Inter-American Foundation has called “grassroots development” has surely had little impact on these oscillations. But little does not mean none, and in a landscape of failed big ideas, the small successful ones are still germinating and putting down roots. Grassroots development, or more generally “empowerment,” defined as collective action by the poor to address their problems for themselves, frequently assisted by local

nongovernmental organizations, deserves a bigger role on the development stage.

How to lift people out of poverty, when markets and state policy (the Chinese solution) are not doing it, is still not clear, and the job is made more challenging by the current global economic slump. Academic analyses suggest that the factors that are more likely to make a person poor include household demographics (number and age of children), education (more is better), employment (some is better than none), geographic location (rural poverty is worse than urban), migration (from rural areas) and ethnicity (a person of indigenous or African descent is more likely to be poor). More recently, indicators of social connectedness, or “social capital,” have also been used, suggesting that weak social networks, vertical and horizontal, are also conducive to poverty. This list of factors generates an ever-longer menu of options for ways to make people not poor. Better health and access to education are basic foundations, but more exotic prescriptions abound. These range from focusing on “household asset endowments” to expanding the “capabilities” of the poor to increasing off-farm income for rural residents to shrinking the informal sector by making it easier to title urban lots and legalize small businesses to disbursing



“conditional cash transfers” to poor parents for keeping their children in school.

In the flow of ideas and projects, grassroots development remains a decidedly minor theme. It is not mentioned in any of the eight Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2000, ranging from “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” to “ensure environmental sustainability”; just one includes the word “empower” and only with respect to women. Grassroots development as a concept has been little examined. Google the term and the search turns up mostly articles by current or former IAF staff, many from the journal you have in your hands. Taking its cue from William and Elizabeth Paddock’s 1973 critique *We Don’t Know How: An Independent Audit of What They Call Success in Foreign Assistance*, the IAF published *They Know How* in 1977. Its title became the IAF’s enduring slogan. William Dyal, the first president of the IAF, defined its approach as one where “the people of the many countries have defined their own problems, initiated their own solutions and enlisted their own resources.” Similar ideas had been incorporated into the Foreign Assistance Act of 1969, the legislation that called for the IAF to support “self-help efforts intended to enlarge opportunities for individual development” and to “assist effective and ever wider participation of people in the development process” and to “foster the establishment and growth of democratic institutions.”

Charles David Kleymeyer, a long-time IAF representative now retired, further defined grassroots development in his 1994 book *Cultural Expression and Grassroots Development* as “a process in which disadvantaged people *organize themselves* to overcome the obstacles to their social and economic well-being”

(italics in original). These efforts, he writes, “normally involve small-scale, practical efforts to achieve change, and are carried out by organizations such as village or neighborhood associations, production or service cooperatives, cultural groups, workers’ associations, ethnic coalitions, or federations of such organizations.” The focus on poor people’s organizations implies an academic concept seldom employed by development economists: collective action, a fundamental issue in human societies and the social sciences. If, according to economists, individual maximization of short-term interest is the norm, why should people cooperate? Markets and individual enterprise may be the motors of economic development, but trust and cooperation among social groups are essential for markets to work. Yet most efforts at stimulating development in poor countries focus on markets and individual entrepreneurs or on government programs and infrastructure, and they leave out the part about trust and cooperation. But throughout less-developed countries, through kinship or territorial groupings, the poor sometimes choose to cooperate, to engage in collective action to address common problems. It is a fact that collective action has often brought a measure of social justice and economic development where markets and government have failed.

### Overlooked by the Big Two

The most enduring theme in international development is whether it is best pursued as top-down or bottom-up, and top-down has been the default position for several decades. In *Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate*, his magisterial account of grassroots development in Bolivia, Kevin Healy documents the trademark ignorance of Western aid



David Scott Luther

*Fundación Dominicana de Desarrollo (FDD) used its 1982 IAF grant to fund a pioneering loan program for tricicleros, urban street vendors organized in solidarity groups. In a span of two years, FDD extended some 700 loans, creating 253 jobs (roughly one job for every \$567 borrowed). The clients maintained a stellar 96 percent repayment rate.*

officials. A 1940s report by one such “expert” on how to pursue agricultural development in the Bolivian highlands recommended improving pasture for cattle and sheep, studiously ignoring the vast herds of llamas, alpacas and vicunas that were grazing there, just as they had for millennia. The widespread environmental damage wreaked by sheep introduced into the Andes and by the monocultures encouraged in the Amazon represents a bare fraction of the disaster

hidden in the \$2.3 trillion spent on international aid over the last five decades to impose such Western blueprints. In the 1970s, as the failures became clearer, bottom-up approaches, vigorously argued and fitfully pursued, began to emerge—but almost always as attempts to induce poor people to “participate” in projects originating in distant government bureaucracies.

The highest profile rerun of the old top-down vs. bottom-up movie has starred development economists Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, and New York University professor William Easterly formerly of the World Bank. According to his book *The End of Poverty*, for Sachs the road to poverty alleviation and sustainable development is through “plans, systems, mutual accountability, and financing mechanisms.” He confidently insists that poverty can be eliminated by 2025 through investing in the Big Five “development interventions”: (1) agricultural inputs; (2) basic health measures; (3) education; (4) power, transport and communications services; and (5) safe drinking water and sanitation. In *Common Wealth*, his most recent book, Sachs adds one more intervention, the introduction of technologies. Collective action by the poor is notably not on his list.

In *The White Man's Burden*, Easterly explicitly takes on thinkers like Sachs, disparaging them as “planners,” who, he says, decide on the nature of aid intervention and design the technical fix and the manner of implementation without regard for “the knowledge of the poor people themselves about their own needs and problems.” Easterly argues effectively for more bottom-up approaches led by “searchers,” who are given the tools and resources to come up with their own entrepreneurial solutions to the problems of poverty. Although Easterly doesn't use the term, this sounds a lot like grassroots development, especially when he proposes as the alternative to top-down planning “a confusing welter of bottom-up social institutions and norms essential for markets.” However, his more recent edited volume *Reinventing Foreign Aid* clarifies that Easterly's vision of the searchers in bottom-up development is limited to “firms in private markets and democratically accountable politicians.” Thus collective action by the poor is not on his list either. Neither of the Big Two development thinkers considers the possibility that “they know how.”

### Hirschman's excellent adventure

At least one renowned scholar did take collective action into account early on. Albert O. Hirschman, now retired at 93, is one of the most influential development economists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1984, 25 years ago, he spent four months visiting

IAF projects in six countries. He recorded his impressions in a slender volume tellingly titled *Getting Ahead Collectively*. Hirschman was a prolific generator of theories and is associated with the idea that no universal economic development template exists. Strategies had to be designed for the circumstances of a particular country, he maintained, because, contrary to the prevailing belief, there was no single correct sequence of interventions. Hirschman was delighted to find confirmation in his visits to IAF projects. A theory, later elaborated upon by Hernando De Soto in his acclaimed *The Mystery of Capital* that appeared in 2000, holds that secure title to land stimulates city-dwellers to improve their homes. Hirschman's visit to a housing project in Cali, Colombia, where people with title had indeed improved their homes validated this notion. However, during a subsequent visit to a squatter settlement in Quilmes, Argentina, he saw that, after their highly organized invasion of an unoccupied parcel, the residents were building solid homes despite having no title, specifically as a strategy to prevent their displacement and to force the authorities to deed them the land. So perhaps secure title is not necessarily a prerequisite for development.

Hirschman discovered other unpredictable sequencing in his travels. He also found that collective action, arguably undertaken because of immediate benefits to each individual, could broaden into public advocacy with less clearly personal benefits. The achievements of organizations of *tricicleros* (vendors on three-wheeled bicycles) in the Dominican Republic and cooperative stores in the altiplano of Peru were apparent to their members, (an outcome rarely analyzed by development economists) and led to more ambitious collective action aimed at the democratization of the public sphere, such as lobbying for supportive policy reforms.

Hirschman asked how such collective action arises and found one clear answer in aggression—attributable to nature, powerful individuals, society or the state—that poor people suffer as a group. But he also proposed another factor, one that he grandly called the “Principle of Conservation and Mutation of Social Energy.” Although Hirschman apparently never developed the concept of social energy further,



IAF vice president Charles Reilly with Albert O. Hirschman.

it is a useful concept that exists somewhere between that of “human capital,” meaning knowledge, and that of “social capital,” personal networks that can be used for economic advancement. He used the term “social energy” in his observation that failure did not always lead to abandonment of collective action. Instead, participants often learned from the failure and tried again later, their social energy in “storage” in the meantime.

Kevin Healy’s histories of grassroots organizations in Bolivia are replete with examples of the social energy cycle. Organizations that Healy describes frequently took between eight and 10 years to get their footing and commonly passed through periods of what Hirschman would have called storage and other observers might have called failure. After myriad trials, their social energy was taken out of storage, and these grassroots organizations, usually with support from small local NGOs, found their place and made major strides forward. Some took disdained traditional products, such as llama meat, and made them valued and trendy. Bolivia has the world’s largest llama herd but, until recently, llama meat was only consumed by the poorest Bolivians; municipal ordinances deemed it unsanitary and prohibited its sale. In fact, the meat of grass-grazing llamas is very low in cholesterol, high in protein and available at much lower ecological cost

than lamb, beef or goat. Lean, highly nutritious llama meat has reappeared in Bolivian markets thanks to collective action by the poor, specifically a grassroots “llama lobby,” and the Bolivian government is now interested in expanding consumption.

Haiti presents an even more challenging scenario than Bolivia. In his recent article in *Grassroots Development*, Robert Maguire, who served as IAF’s representative in Haiti for 19 years, documented the social energy in storage there, as grassroots groups waited for the political turmoil to subside. In a visit to Haiti he met with a leader of a former IAF grantee who related the devastating consequences of Haiti’s political instability on his home community. Then suddenly the Haitian “pulled a document from his knapsack that outlined plans he and (community) leaders had begun formulating to revive programs in education, health and small business development.”

All of this can, of course, also go badly. Corruption happens even in small tightly-knit communities if controls are not strong enough. Individual self-interest can trump the common good, and “elite capture” occurs, meaning powerful local figures become corrupted. Even in the absence of corruption, the benefits of collective action are not always clear. Judith Tandler, in her IAF-supported study of Bolivian cooperatives in the 1980s, noted such features as small and declining membership, weak participation and entrenched leadership. She contrasted this with the frequent idealization of cooperatives as more democratic and desirable approaches to rural development than those implemented by ineffective or repressive governments. However, like Hirschman, she found that some seemingly predictable situations did not always materialize. According to Tandler, sometimes the more prosperous entrenched leaders, for example, did not pose a problem for cooperatives that drew members from small, dispersed communities in which the leaders still resided and were subject to some controls. She concluded that, based on various factors, like other development strategies, sometimes cooperatives worked well and sometimes they didn’t.

### Easing the white man’s burden

Getting ahead collectively has never been more than a remote valley on the international development landscape. Interesting things happen but the news

doesn't travel far enough or high enough. Meanwhile, the current generation of prominent development economists still has blinders with reference to the power of civil society and social capital, even as major donors remain stymied about how to do development. As Easterly notes, "success is rare and failure is common," and institutions as exalted as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund can seem almost penitential about their funding and are no better at reporting the results than many grassroots groups.

It is all the more curious then that Easterly's prescription is limited to firms and individuals and ignores what has happened in many of those remote valleys. Interestingly, he pins his hopes on "democratically accountable leaders," but all of his models of success are really entire national economies, from Japan to Botswana. Governments, and economies, will not be reformed only by politicians or by the market; an organized citizenry is the indispensable foundation. Nor is the firm the only worthwhile model from Latin America where grassroots traditions remain strong and can become the basis for enterprises that survive and even flourish in the new "flattened" world of globalization. Practicing their own brand of "communal capitalism," such businesses occupy a distinctive niche. Some have offices and sales outlets in capital cities and markets overseas. In Mexico, none of the community forest enterprises that I have studied has foundered due to competition, although organizational problems have felled a few.

Community governance institutions, some rooted in millennia-old tradition and some in the Mexican Revolution of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, are being adapted to these enterprises.

To deal with the particular demands of diversifying industries, which can include sophisticated sawmills, drying operations and expanding ventures in ecotourism, the more successful forest communities have had to develop new, specialized bodies. These include the Review Commission in Ixtlán de Juárez, Sierra Norte, Oaxaca, to which 20 community residents have been elected from various walks of life, including professionals, mechanics, newspaper dealers and carpenters, all conversant in the issues facing forest enterprises. This body of "searchers" can deliberate for up to three days, continuing into a



*Servicios Comunitarios, A.C., a community forest enterprise in Oaxaca.*

fourth day if necessary, on matters affecting the community's multi-million-dollar enterprise that includes joint ventures with other communities to make furniture for schools and a three-store chain in the city of Oaxaca. A strong communal structure that is neither privately nor government-owned, it represents a "third way" of bringing about economic development and reconciling it with democratic practices, conservation and an equitable distribution of income.

Kevin Healy documents a similar organizational syncretism in Bolivia where a federation of cooperatives producing organic cacao and chocolate uses a business-oriented organizational model incorporating indigenous traditions such as kinship networks, rotating leadership, management by consensus and the extensive use of assemblies. In contrast to industries in which out-of-control executive compensation is finally being scrutinized, El Ceibo for years adhered to a policy of paying everyone the same salary, from the warehouse janitor to the cooperative member taking



his turn as CEO. Now grossing some \$2 million dollars annually, it has backed off from this extreme posture and conceded that professional managers might merit higher salaries. The association marketing llama meat and fiber also drew from tradition, including the organization of territory into *ayllus*, or administrative units, creating what Healy calls “cultural hybrids.”

Hundreds of examples of similarly successful cooperatives and communal enterprises exist throughout the Americas and beyond. Kurt Hoffman of the Shell Foundation has noted that less than 10 percent of official and private aid flows to them and calls for more “pro-poor-enterprise interventions.” Some such pro-poor enterprises are driven by grassroots vision and ideas and are assisted by external investment in the ideas of the poor, rather than in an “intervention” that assumes that the poor have no energy or creativity. These enterprises also give new meaning to the constant call for “participation” in economic development efforts. As an IAF representative for 11 years, I was always puzzled by the demand swirling around “participation” in the rest of the development community. Participation has always been a *sine qua non* for an IAF award, but not participation in response to an external demand. The IAF funds, either directly or through NGOs, grassroots groups

whose essence is participation from the ground up. Certainly corrupt leadership looms as a possibility, but the onus is on the members and only through participation can they hold leaders accountable.

Supporting grassroots “searcher” organizations, as opposed to individuals, requires some serious modifications of traditional development planning using “logical frameworks,” or logframes, that set forth, step-by step, inputs, outputs, purposes, goals, objectives and activities that happen within a set timeframe, with success measured by completion. Some form of planning is always necessary for coordination at the beginning of a project, as is accountability for organizational actions. Grassroots development, however, supports organizations, not projects, and, as “complex adaptive systems,” they must constantly shift strategies and goals in response to the pressures of their context. The logframe must become a fluid document. As Pat Breslin argued in this journal in 2005, “The responsive grassroots development approach sees in human communities the same capacity for self-organization that scientists see in all complex adaptive systems. Accordingly, it relies more on the capacity of poor people to understand their own problems and craft their own solutions—often in dialogue with local technicians—than it relies on projects designed from the outside. It emphasizes the uniqueness of each project. It looks for success, as much, if not more, in intangible outcomes like increased human capabilities as it does in quantitative project results. It recognizes that complex systems are adaptive, and it seeks to strengthen adaptiveness so that it can be carried forward to the next development challenge.”

Grassroots organizations are an example of “emergence,” of higher levels of integration that develop from kinship and community-based social systems. People are poor because of bad health and poor education and insufficient assets, but also because of insufficient connective social tissue that ties them to larger structures in their societies. Grassroots organizations provide some of this connective tissue and, when present, they make Easterly’s ironic “white man’s burden” much lighter. As Breslin notes in his own review of the books by Sachs and Easterly in the 2007 journal, “the infrastructure of leadership



Robin Bowman

*On the telephone, the late Luis Cruz Mamani, who held leadership positions in the 1980s and 1990s with IAF grantee El Ceibo, the grassroots enterprise owned by 1,200 farmer-members of 42 cacao cooperatives. El Ceibo, Bolivia's largest chocolate company, uses indigenous Amazonian agro-forestry methods and Andean organizational traditions.*

for bottom-up development has already emerged. It is made up of thousands of grassroots groups and nongovernmental organizations, many of them with a long history of progress against the region's widespread poverty."

### **Still organizing after all these years**

Large-scale development projects originating in multilateral and bilateral organizations and central governments are not going away anytime soon. But given the acknowledged failures, international development professionals must remain open to diversity in approaches. As Healy notes in his book, "there are no 'magic bullets' in development anywhere, including the free market" and "international and donor agencies' financing of incipient organizations can allow new visionaries to surface and begin innovative small-scale projects that may eventually grow in importance and scope of impact." This echoes Easterly, except for that bit about organizations. Grassroots development, the collective action of the poor to solve their problems with modest infusions of external support, is clearly one small but crucial alternative to "big development." The grassroots approach also confirms growing evidence that

"place-based" management, meaning environmental management that arises from these grassroots organizations, is a key strategic response to issues ranging from global warming to water pollution.

In closing his book on grassroots development, Hirschman puzzled over what to call the bearers of social energy whether in NGOs or in grassroots organizations. *Promotor* is one of the most common terms in Spanish, but its English cognate, promoter, sounds like someone who tries to fill rock concerts. The closest English equivalent is really community organizer. Here in the United States, the profession of community organizer has acquired stature, now that a Community-Organizer-in-Chief is in the White House. To me, this offers hope that development economists might come to depend somewhat less on costly, top-down "interventions" and more on the energy and invention of the poor and those community organizers who can help the poor realize their ambitions collectively.

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*David Bray is professor and associate chair of the Department of Earth and Environment at Florida International University in Miami. Between 1986 and 1997 he was an IAF representative working mainly in Mexico.*



*Kevin Healy with Guillermo Flores from  
Candelaria in Chuquisaca, Bolivia.*

Patrick Breslin

# Our Man in Bolivia

By Patrick Breslin

**B**ill Dyal, the Inter-American Foundation's founding president, knew just what he wanted in the men and women who would represent his new agency in Latin America and the Caribbean: "People who could sit in the ambassador's office in the morning, then get into a jeep or climb on a mule and in a few hours be in a *campesino's* house and be equally at home there."

Dyal knew his visionary approach to development assistance would have to be explained and defended both to U.S. diplomats who saw foreign aid as a tool for pursuing short-term U.S. interests, and skeptical Latin Americans aware of the unfulfilled promises of the Alliance for Progress and iterative U.S. interventions in their affairs. He'd determined that IAF staff would not live abroad, underlining that Latin Americans, not foreigners, were conceiving and carrying out their development projects. The IAF's face would be Foundation representatives (FRs) who shuttled in and out of the region for weeks at a time, touching base with the U.S. embassy as well as rural villages. Their job would be to visit the groups whose proposals had potential, analyze the feasibility, take a reading of community interest, then shepherd meritorious proposals through IAF's internal review process and monitor progress. From Dyal's tenure forward, FRs have also been expected to tease insights about development out of their experiences and communicate those insights in print and in public venues.

When Kevin Healy joined the IAF staff in 1978, he already knew his way around diplomats and *campesinos*. He'd been a Peace Corps Volunteer on the Peruvian coast of Lake Titicaca and the islands of Taquile and Amantani before Rough-Guide-toting tourists discovered the area, and he'd learned about embassies during a stint on a Georgetown University-USAID project in Paraguay. Additionally, Healy, who earned a Ph.D. in development sociology

from Cornell, was a highly trained analyst of the historical, political and social processes that affect development efforts. And that, too, fit with Dyal's vision of a mutually enriching relationship between IAF's work in the field and the academic world. That vision had prompted Dyal, as he shaped the IAF, to consult with faculty of the Latin American studies programs at U.S. universities, and Healy was one of several Ph.D.s he hired.

Last year, Healy marked 30 years as a FR, the longest anyone has held that job, and he's not finished yet. He is among those employees who saw in their work at the IAF an opportunity to pursue intellectual interests and a strategic vision in which individual grants became building blocks in a long-term process. The specialized expertise they developed at the IAF brought international recognition, enabling several to move into key positions in—and in some cases to head—prestigious university departments, foundations, think-tanks, other development agencies and international institutions. Healy chose to stay at the IAF. As an FR, he has handled several portfolios—Panama, Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Honduras—but Bolivia is the country with which he is most identified. And he keeps heading back, dropping in on the grassroots groups he has funded over three decades, looking for more like them and adding to his understanding of phenomena as diverse as the development impact of the narcotics trade and stewardship of natural resources. In a public ceremony in 1989 the Bolivian Ministry of Education and Culture recognized his contributions to the country's development, and his relevant bibliography, with the "Gran Orden de la Educación Boliviana."

It was through Healy that I, then a free-lance writer on assignment in Bolivia, gained my initial insight into the Inter-American Foundation more than 25 years ago. At his slightly apologetic suggestion, I'd registered at the Oruro, a La Paz hotel. I landed



Robin Bowman

*Healy on Lake Titicaca, below, as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1968 and, above, as an IAF representative with Aymara leaders of the Cooperativa Warawarani in 1986.*



Courtesy Kevin Healy

at the airport close to midnight and gasped in the thin air at almost 12,500 feet as the taxi driver navigated through a very dark part of town. At the hotel, I had to stop every few steps to catch my breath as I dragged my suitcase up three flights to my room which was a decent size, but furnished like a monk's cell: a wooden table, one chair, a couple of narrow beds. It was cold—night air at that altitude doesn't hold warmth—and my teeth were chattering as I

burrowed into the blankets. I knew FRs on travel got the standard government per diem, so Healy obviously could afford someplace better. Was the hotel some kind of ascetic guilt trip?

The explanation was in the lobby the next morning, although it took me a few days to grasp. Healy was due at the end of that week, and every morning groups of people in indigenous dress were downstairs, all conducting important business with the desk clerk. Several times a group approached me to ask when "Benito" was arriving. (Healy had warned me that people in Bolivia knew him as Benito.) Eventually, the desk clerk also checked with me and showed me the list of appointments he'd scheduled for Healy. That's when I realized that the Oruro, located near a popular market where thousands of indigenous Bolivians milled around, buying and selling just about everything, made perfect sense. Had the Indians tried to approach the lobby of one of the international hotels downtown, the doorman would have directed them to wait outside. Healy's hotel wasn't about his comfort, but about the comfort of the people who had traveled long distances to see him. Plus the lobby was free office space and the desk clerk a pro bono appointments secretary. I was



*From the right, Healy, Bolivian minister of education Mariano Baptista Gumucio and U.S. Ambassador Robert Gelbard at the ceremony awarding Healy the Gran Orden de la Educación Boliviana medal in 1989.*

starting to see that the Inter-American Foundation wasn't your typical foreign aid bureaucracy.

On a more recent trip, I noticed that Healy was now lodged in a wired-to-the-Web business hotel closer to the center of La Paz. Bolivia had changed as well in the intervening years. An indigenous leader is president and some of those who had waited in the Oruro's lobby preside over government ministries—like David Choquehuanca who, as a young Aymara from near Lake Titicaca, once successfully submitted his community's rabbit-raising project to Healy and is now foreign minister. Telling an indigenous person in today's Bolivia to "wait outside" is something you might want to think through first.

Several months ago, as part of research for a book on grassroots development, I began interviewing Healy about his work. I'd already talked to some visionary Latin Americans who had blazed new paths, but I was looking for insights into what makes a funder able to recognize and understand those visionaries. In Healy's case, it soon became obvious that part of the answer lay in an interest in indigenous culture he traces all the way back to a trip to a

Blackfoot reservation during a summer in Montana arranged by his father, a Washington journalist and a Native-American history buff. The interest flowered in the summer of 1966 when Healy, a college student, went to Peru with a Notre Dame service program that placed him in a Maryknoll mission parish near Lake Titicaca. "I fell in love with the beauty around the lake and the people," he said. That and the work he saw the Peace Corps doing motivated him to become a Volunteer after graduation and he wound up assigned to Titicaca's coastline and islands.

Those two years were like an overture, introducing themes that would recur through Healy's work in Latin America right up to the present. His first assignment, as an extension agent introducing Andean farmers to a new variety of potato—and its package of chemical fertilizers and toxic pesticides—ended in disaster when the plants were unable to survive high altitude frosts. Worse, the farmers had gone into debt to acquire the new technology. Shocked, Healy began to question the vaunted superiority of modern methods. What, he asked himself, could a recent political science graduate with a crash course on agriculture



teach farmers whose ancestors had, over five millennia, developed more than 3,000 varieties of potatoes adapted to the multiplicity of climatic zones up and down their mountainous environment? The irony grew more painful as he reflected that his own ancestors had fled Ireland three generations earlier when their potato crops failed.

Skepticism about the wisdom of pushing inappropriate Western technical schemes on the poor would remain one of Healy's constant concerns. Many years later, in his book *Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate* (Notre Dame Press: 2001), Healy would analyze the biases of Western aid, specifically the belief that Andean Indians were ignorant and a drag on progress and that imported Western solutions were the best hope for improving things. His Peace Corps experience and his graduate work planted in his mind the seeds of an alternative approach. When considering what had drawn him so powerfully to the Andes, he realized that it was precisely the richness of one of the world's great civilizations. He began to see the haunting music, the fine textiles, the native crops, livestock and medicinal plants, and the traditional forms of social organization as valuable resources that, meshed with the best elements of Western technology, could be the pillars upon which a different development strategy could rest.

Healy spent a good deal of his Peace Corps service on Taquile, a rugged island of steep slopes and terraced plots traversed by stone paths and archways, some dating from pre-Hispanic times. One of his projects there was to turn traditional skills into a source of

income. He was first taken with the *chullo*, a stocking cap, then came to appreciate the island's weaving heritage that goes back to the ancient Inca, Pukara and Colla civilizations. "I thought the gorgeous textiles offered an option to earn something," Healy recalled. He came up with the idea of testing Taquile weavings for the pricier Cuzco market and helped channel them there. Years later the island became a tourist destination and the community organization that sent weavings to Cuzco evolved into an outlet for local sales. "Today, some 380 families are involved, we have four stores, and Taquileños remember that it was Benito who first had the vision," said Juan Quispe, a Taquileño whose father had worked with the young Peace Corps Volunteer. Juan's father, Julio, had a more amusing recollection: "When he lived here, he sometimes wore local clothing. He would go to Puno with us, dressed like that, and people would say: 'Which woman on Taquile gave birth to a white boy?'" Years later, in 2005, UNESCO ratified Healy's admiration by designating Taquile and its textile arts among the "masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritages of humanity."

Between his service with the Peace Corps and graduate studies at Cornell, Healy, under contract to Georgetown University (where he had just completed an M.A.), worked in Paraguay with the Universidad Católica, one of the few centers of independent thought in a country living under a long-term military dictatorship. Jesuits on the social sciences faculty introduced him to a rural social movement based on liberation theology; it made such a powerful impression that he wanted to return to Paraguay to work on a thesis that would contribute to the movement's goals. In 1974, his proposal to do so won him one of the very first IAF Fellowships supporting dissertation research on grassroots issues. The Fellowship, though, came with a string—the researcher had to have an IAF grantee as a host. "But IAF's only Paraguayan grantee at that time turned me down," said Healy.

When the IAF found an alternative site in Bolivia's southern department of Chuquisaca, Healy readily agreed and settled into the town of Monteagudo for the next 18 months. "I wanted to look at elites," Healy recalled. "There was a lot of research going on then about the poor. But I wanted

to study how elites shaped the development process to capture the lion's share of the benefits." The stay in Monteagudo also let Healy pursue another interest. "I saved everything I could from my fellowship and bought weavings," he recalled. The knowledge acquired would later lead Healy toward funding decisions that would help revitalize a dying textile tradition and bring it to international attention.

The resulting dissertation was a pioneering study that disclosed how the 15 wealthiest local families had successfully resisted the land reforms of the 1950s and maintained a debt-peonage system of labor. A handful of town-based "bosses" formed the other side of the structure, controlling local government, cooperatives and the region's largest agro-industry. The two power elites worked in tandem to assure that loans from the Inter-American Development Bank and funds from other sources were used to benefit themselves, excluding the rural majority and magnifying inequality. In 1982, the dissertation became a best-selling book, *Caciques y Patronos, una experiencia de desarrollo rural en el sud de Bolivia*, the first entry on Healy's 22-page list of publications and public presentations that professors living under publish or perish regimes at research universities would envy. It is a standard text in Bolivia, used by students of rural power relations, land reform, the Guaraní peoples and development. It returned to the limelight recently when Healy was interviewed about it on Bolivian television in connection with the land reform law passed last year. The book's durable popularity is one of the bases of Healy's recognition as a scholar who is one of the leading U.S. experts on Bolivian development and indigenous movements. He draws from this knowledge in the graduate-level classes he has taught at Georgetown and American University and now teaches at the George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs as part of the Latin American Studies core curriculum.

Healy's career at the IAF spans the decades during which indigenous peoples in many parts of the world moved decisively to free themselves from local versions of apartheid. His IAF work, in Bolivia and in other countries, gave him a front-row seat as indigenous movements took shape throughout Latin America and wrestled with poverty, discrimination, political

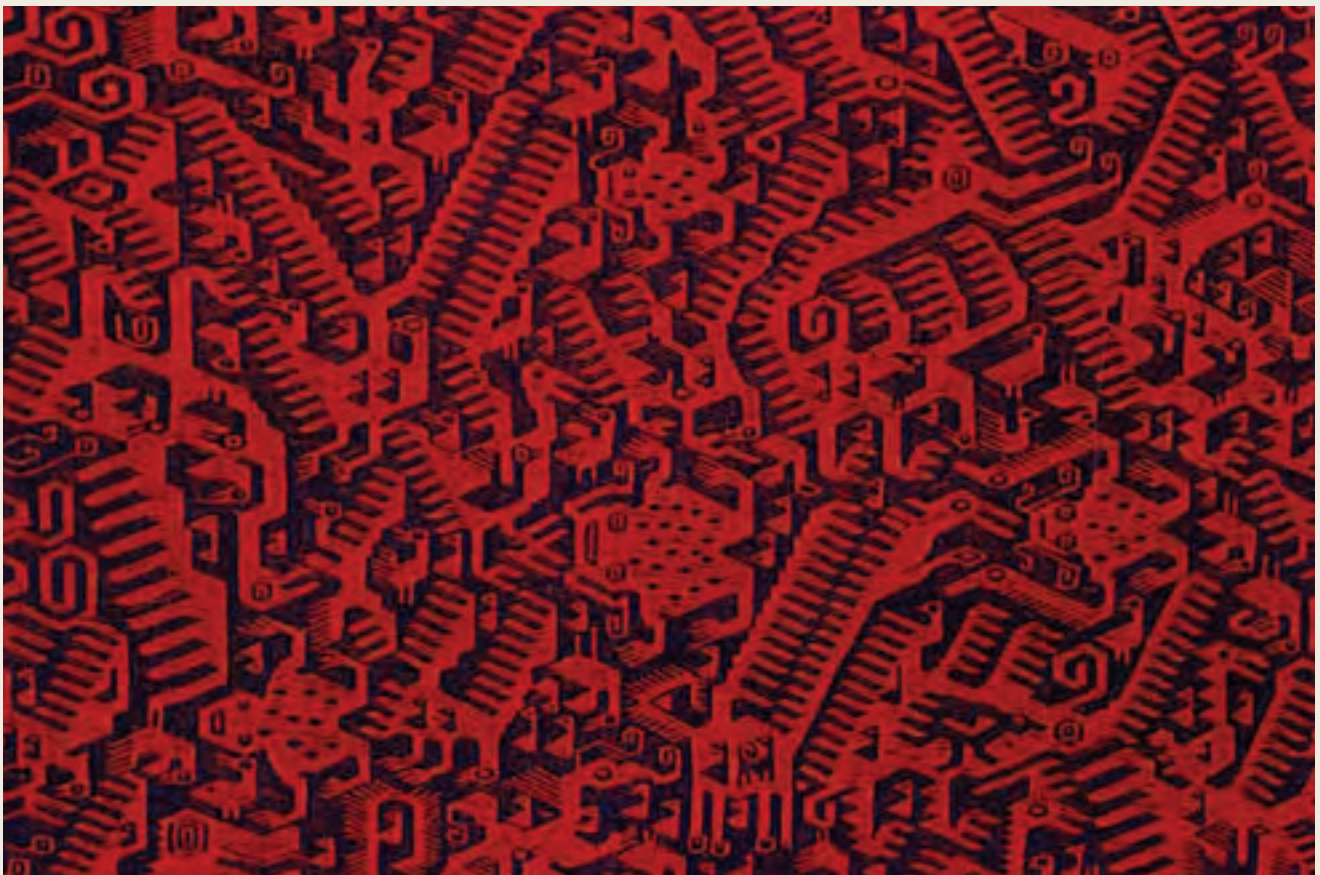
exclusion and threats to the culture. In Bolivia, Healy saw the possibilities early on. "Given the high degree of political mobilization, it was clear to me that the potential was there for the indigenous majority to elect a president who came out of their own organizations and long-term struggles," he said. "I wanted to be part of that process to promote political empowerment from the grassroots, a process that owes a lot to the growth of civil society in Bolivia, which the IAF was part of." Indigenous Bolivians did eventually help sweep one of their own into office, an event at least as significant, and growing out of as sustained a struggle for civil rights and social justice, as Barack Obama's election to the United States presidency. When Evo Morales, made his initial visit to Washington in 2008, Healy was the obvious choice to introduce him at his first venue in Washington, D.C., American University.

The two men had first met in Cochabamba in the early 1990s, when Healy was visiting a group of campesinos in the Chapare region, where Morales' organization of *cocaleros*, or coca growers, was a powerful political force. By then, Healy had already published the first two scholarly articles to appear in the U.S. on that movement. "As we were driving out of Cochabamba, the leader of this group said we have to stop at the Federación del Trópico because we can't take a gringo into the Chapare without the approval of Evo Morales. We found Evo alone in the office on a Saturday morning, and when I first came in he appeared very suspicious and asked who I was and what I was going to do in the Chapare. I tried a number of things to allay his discomfort and I said that I had visited his home community of Orinoco, in Oruro, where we supported women's training programs. I mentioned a woman leader from Orinoco whom I knew via our grant, he immediately said she was a good friend. With this, the suspicion began to recede. When I named a few other NGOs we worked with in Cochabamba, his aggressive attitude evaporated, he turned on the charm of a true politician and was extremely friendly and sent us on our way."

The nearly 400 grants that Healy has funded over 30 years were not awarded exclusively to indigenous groups, but they have included important support for the Kuna in Panama, the Garifuna in Honduras, tourism projects on Taquile, microcredit



*With IAF funding, Bolivian grantees revived quinoa, a world-class source of protein, and the world-class Jalq'a weaving tradition.*



Courtesy ASUR

projects serving women in Peru and for communities in the Ecuadorian Andes and Colombian Amazon. Successful grantees across Bolivia bear out Healy's conviction that indigenous culture can show the way toward real development. Many of their proposals were pioneering efforts to shift the emphasis from Western technologies to alternatives refined over centuries by a remarkable agrarian civilization. Healy's critically acclaimed *Llamas, Weavings and Organic Chocolate* describes how nine such IAF-funded trailblazers overcame the obstacles and succeeded in emphasizing long undervalued traditional resources as a means to development.

Central de Cooperativas Agropecuarias Operación Tierra (CECAOT), for example, is an organization of farmers that works around the harsh but beautiful salt flats in southern Bolivia to grow, process and market quinoa, a high-protein grain once a staple of the Inca Empire, bringing it to discerning consumers around the world. A group of settlers in the Alto Beni grew their production of organic cacao into El Ceibo, a cooperative enterprise that incorporated Andean norms of service and accountability and became Bolivia's major producer of chocolate. A herders' organization, after a long struggle, won official recognition of the economic, environmental and health benefits of llamas and alpacas. Not surprisingly, these grassroots agendas have been embraced by the administration of Bolivia's first indigenous president.

One account in Healy's book focuses on the revival of Andean textile traditions. A former convent in Sucre houses a textile museum and shop run by Antropólogos del Sur Andino (ASUR), an organization created in the mid-1980s by the late Gabriel Martínez, a Spaniard, and his Chilean wife, Veronica Cereceda, along with other anthropologists. Martínez and Cereceda were representative of the Latin American generation of the 1960s—young, sophisticated intellectuals searching for social justice and answers to their countries' problems in their indigenous roots. A wave of fanatically right-wing military coups from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s sent such people fleeing from one country to another. Those who survived—and many didn't—often found that exile expanded their horizons, enriched their ideas and propagated their ideals.

The couple bounced from Bolivia to Chile to Peru, but their passion was Bolivia, specifically the cultural significance surrounding the weavings of the highlands, a tradition endangered by the pressures of modernization and opportunistic traders offering ridiculously low prices. Many communities soon discovered they had sold off their cultural patrimony for a pittance. Cereceda was an expert on textiles and understood their central role in Andean life; Martínez spoke fluent Quechua. They submitted a proposal to the IAF for a small grant to help them identify and research a cluster of communities whose weaving heritage featured especially attractive designs. Healy's academic background made him receptive to the idea that research can be a tool in grassroots development—information and thought often usefully precede action—and he steered the proposal through the mill. The payoff was quick in coming.

Martínez and Cereceda settled on the Jalq'a community of Irupampa, north of Sucre, for their first of many weaving workshops. They arrived there just in time to find weavers who still remembered the traditional techniques and young women interested in learning them. But there were no models for them to use—all the classic weavings had been sold. So Cereceda contacted collectors around the world asking for photographs. Enlarged and hung on the walls of workshops and homes, the mysterious figures of ambivalent devils and fanciful animals floating and tumbling in a dim void spoke out of a collective subconscious to a new generation of Jalq'a weavers who started by copying them faithfully. As the worldview the designs represented took root in their minds, a renaissance appeared on the simple looms beneath their flying fingers. Cereceda organized exhibits to establish the weavings as works of art and with recognition came value. Today the weavings command a realistic price, and beyond that, respect. Unique to a previously ignored and disdained people, Jalq'a weavings have become emblems of Bolivia, to be displayed with pride. ASUR stores and show rooms continue to be the most visited tourist sites in Sucre. ASUR has moved on to other traditions and attracts practitioners from throughout the hemisphere, eager to learn from its work.



Ann Peters

In celebration of the IAF's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1994, Healy co-curated the program "Culture and Development" for the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife, which brought 100 participants of indigenous and African descent from 16 IAF projects in nine countries to the National Mall for 10 days of exhibits. Pictured are Aymara farmers from Lake Titicaca, Jalq'a artisans and, above, Gabriel Martínez.



The ASUR example tells a lot about how Healy's involvement with his work goes beyond funding and how seriously he has taken Bill Dyal's mandate to learn and communicate the lessons. Healy first wrote about ASUR in *Grassroots Development* in 1992. He later updated and revised the article into a chapter for *Llamas, Weavings and Organic Chocolate*, bringing the experience to a broad readership in universities, the development community and beyond. In between, he used other venues to get out ASUR's story: exhibits in the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in 1992 and 1994; a companion exhibit at the Smithsonian's Sachler Museum; lectures at the Library of Congress, the Textile Museum of Washington, D.C., and at various universities. But ASUR is only

one among several grantees to gain international recognition through such exposure. "Kevin has the vision to combine academic life with activism," said Waskar Ari, a former IAF Fellow and the first Aymara ever to earn a Ph.D. in history. Now teaching at the University of Nebraska, he remembers Healy and his stays at the Hotel Oruro in the early 1980s. "Years later, you see the results of what he funded, the big impact that transcends the projects themselves. More people should know about this guy, working at the grassroots."

Healy's career-long romance with the Andes reveals many of the skills and values that are needed for successful grassroots development. But maybe, after all the experience on the ground, all the academic training and lifelong scholarly inquiry is taken into account, it comes down to something as idiosyncratic as an eye for beauty, something Healy says he inherited from his mother, a professional interior designer. Even when he talks about the nutritional value of quinoa, he can't help mentioning the striking golden-red stalks waving in the fields. Once, in an isolated community called Rayqaypampa, Healy found his doubts growing as evidence mounted that the NGO of young professionals intent on revitalizing production of native species of potatoes were not yet understood by the indigenous farmers they were trying to help. For most FRs, that would have been enough to reject the proposal. But Healy's attention was drawn to the farmers' beautiful ethnic dress. To him, it signaled a strong sense of cultural identity—and a need to probe more deeply, which made Healy willing to bet, correctly, that community pride in local agricultural wisdom would eventually surface in support of the project.

Responding to ideas coming from Latin America is the essential core of IAF's approach to funding. It's an approach that gives FRs in the field a great deal of discretion to employ their personal skills and pursue their personal interests. They still have to get the project through a rigorous approval process, but perhaps only at IAF could enthusiasm for the beauty of a landscape or an article of clothing help drive a funding decision.

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*Patrick Breslin, former vice president for external affairs, retired from the IAF after 22 years to work on his book on grassroots leaders in Latin America. He may be reached at [patbreslin@yahoo.com](mailto:patbreslin@yahoo.com).*



*Dancers from Taquile at the festive opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in 2004 included Salvador Huatta, who had worked with Healy in the late 1960s. Huatta celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on the National Mall.*



Cynthia Vidaurri

*Healy, President Evo Morales and Ambassador Larry Palmer, IAF president, at a luncheon in Morales' honor at the National Museum of the American Indian in November 2008.*

# Measures to Match the Mission:

## How the Grassroots Development Framework Came to Be

By Marion Ritchey Vance

*Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.*

—Quote said to have been posted  
above Albert Einstein's desk

“What does it all add up to?” The question was posed to me by the president of the Inter-American Foundation back in the 1980s when I was struggling to describe IAF’s portfolio of projects in Colombia. Hoping to convey what two decades of funding in that country really meant, I had eschewed the standard breakdown by sector—housing, agriculture, education—and grouped projects instead by role: those that strengthened grassroots organizations and built regional networks; those that shed new light on old problems; those that led to policy changes that addressed underlying causes of poverty.

I was casting about for alternatives because the usual way of showing results—by counting the houses built, hectares planted, schoolbooks purchased—just missed the point. Worse, such measures could raise questions. The numbers looked anemic and the cost/benefit ratio prohibitive compared with statistics racked up by traditional, top-down aid agencies. That early attempt at reshaping the way we define results culminated in my 1991 publication *The Art of Association: NGOs in Colombia*. The ideas that took root in the book grew eventually into the Grassroots Development Framework.

### A different charter

Born of legislation crafted in 1969, the Inter-American Foundation was intended to work from the bottom up, to engage with people at the grassroots. Prominent in IAF’s enabling legislation were phrases like “the dignity and worth of each human being” and “the opportunity to develop potential and... to live in justice and peace.” As the IAF contended

with the practicalities of implementing its lofty charter, certain bedrock themes and goals emerged. The original staff approached grantmaking with the understanding that it wasn’t only about building that bridge or marketing that crop. It was about responding to community initiative, supporting organizations and networks, broadening participation in civil society. On its 40th anniversary, the IAF can look back with pride on its contribution to the broad array of nongovernmental organizations now devoted to grassroots development in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

Adequately assessing the results was a different matter; the issue bedeviled the IAF from the beginning. Clearly, certain standard data were required for accountability, but numeric values alone could not account for many of the grantees’ most important achievements. The original board of directors urged attention to the aspects of social development inherent in IAF’s experimental approach. By nature, those aspects defied conventional measures. IAF needed a different yardstick. Bill Dyal, its first president, advocated an open-minded spirit of inquiry—including the willingness to recognize and admit failure. “Learning” was commonly understood to be a top priority, but (then as now) there was little consensus on just what that meant or how to go about it.

IAF’s signature book *They Know How*, published in 1977, was the first attempt to distill what staff had learned from five years of funding grassroots organizations. The book dwelt primarily on the “vital signs” and “social gains” that characterized successful endeavors and on the institutional weaknesses that seemed common to those that failed. In 1984



Jamie Donaldson

*Patricia Mecías Vidal and Oneida Guzmán benefited from IAF grantee ACEP's legal services resulting in salary settlements, better working conditions and the enforcement of legislative reforms that brought domestic workers into Columbia's social security system.*

Princeton economist Albert Hirschman took a similar tack, illuminating the “social energy” and other intangible results of IAF-funded projects in *Getting Ahead Collectively*. But by the late 1980s such nebulous concepts had fallen out of favor; under new leadership the IAF's emphasis shifted to hard data and indicators of tangible, material results. While this approach satisfied the need for numbers, it was disquieting to veteran staff who perceived a trend toward treating the visible symptoms of poverty and away from efforts to tackle its causes. Also, in the quest for “objective measures” it became more expedient to focus on *activities and inputs*, such as number of training courses held or bags of improved seed distributed, than on *outcomes* attributable to the training or the technology.

*The Art of Association* took up the quest for a broader interpretation of impact in the chapter “Measuring Up”:

Through myriad small-scale projects, NGOs offer hands-on experience in the workings of democratic society—gleaning information, making decisions, resolving conflicts, taking responsibility... changing attitudes and relationships, [gaining] greater voice in the affairs of village and nation.

In general, the focus of evaluation is too narrow and the tools too limited to reflect the true scope and value of NGO work. The danger is that if short term, material progress is what is valued, grantees will (consciously or unconsciously) adjust programs accordingly.

We need to devise ways to account for long-term civic benefits as well as short-term [material] ones. Otherwise we may stifle the

very quality that gives NGOs such relevance at the grassroots. It is not a question of quantitative versus qualitative as the argument is sometimes cast. It is a question of *what is considered a “result.”*

### For example

The accomplishments of the Asociación Colombiana para Estudios de la Población (ACEP) illustrate the case for broadening our field of vision. The population that most concerned ACEP were the maids in Bogotá. A large segment of the city’s work force, these *domésticas* carry triple liability: gender, class, a job that is universally denigrated. They embody the scourge of poverty, not simply in the economic sense but in status, self-image and isolation. Their stories tell a great deal about why old women and young children wind up on the streets. In 1983, IAF made a \$164,000 grant to ACEP to disseminate findings of its research into problems faced by domestic workers and to provide legal services. Direct, tangible actions were recorded. In Bogotá alone, the staff handled 19,539 requests for legal assistance, including 10,974 to secure payment legally owed. Three-quarters of the cases were resolved through consultations that informed both parties of their rights and responsibilities.

But there was much more. The interaction among maids, employers and ACEP staff set in motion a gradual transformation in status, relationships and perceptions of who is worthy of protection under the law. ACEP discovered that legislation dating from 1977 had brought domestic workers within Colombia’s social security system and launched a campaign to turn that legislative intent into reality. By 1988, an anonymous, voiceless population generally written off by policy-makers became eligible for medical and dental care, hospitalization and crucial old-age pensions. People who had accepted their lot as inevitable became proponents for change that begins, at least, to break the cycle of chronic poverty.

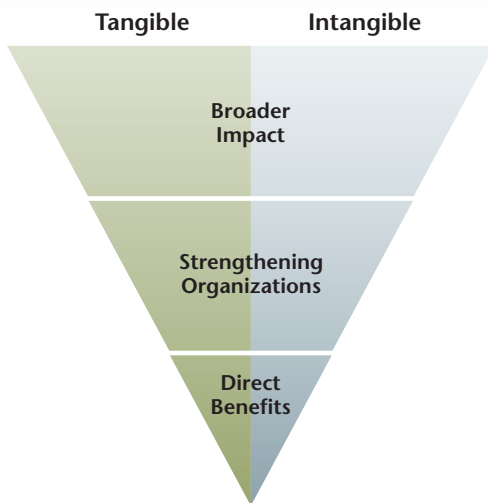
### What counts?

The Grassroots Development Framework was an attempt to account for such multi-layered, far reaching results—to match measures of success to the mission expressed in the IAF’s founding charter. It originated on a napkin, over lunch, as two Foundation

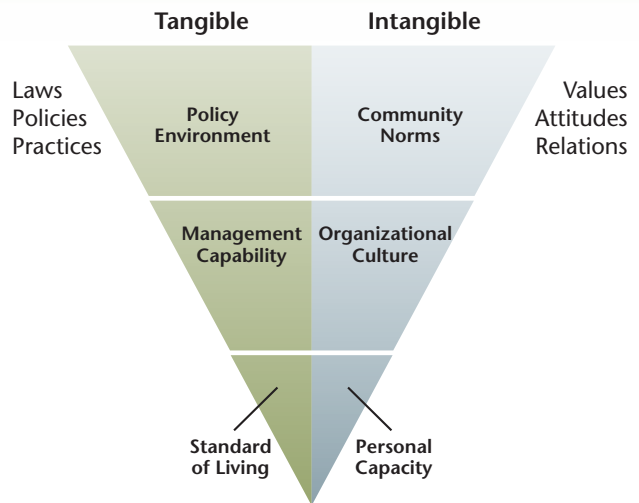
representatives, Carl Swartz and myself, sketched out elements that experience had led us to consider in assessing project outcomes. The shape that emerged gave the framework its original name, “the cone,” Figure A. Two premises underly the cone. The first is that sustainable development acts at three levels: 1) improving living conditions for participants; 2) strengthening community organizations and networks; and 3) addressing the policies, practices and attitudes that perpetuate poverty. The second premise is that the less tangible effects, such as self-respect, tolerance, accountability and vision, are as important to long-term success as concrete improvements in production, housing or income.

At the narrow end of the cone are the results most directly evident *in situ*, at the core of the project. The cone widens upward to take in what occurs at the organizational level and tops out in the realm of policies and practices that have, or have not, changed as a result. It gives equal weight to tangible products and *intangible* aspects. The six “windows” of the cone, Figure B, arose not from theory, but from the stories of hundreds of organizations. Specific variables flesh out each. For example, community norms are reflected in values, attitudes, and relationships. Figure C takes the visual image a step further, representing schematically the dynamics at play in the grassroots development process. These complex interactions between social gains and material progress, and among different levels, are well understood by seasoned field workers but difficult to verbalize.

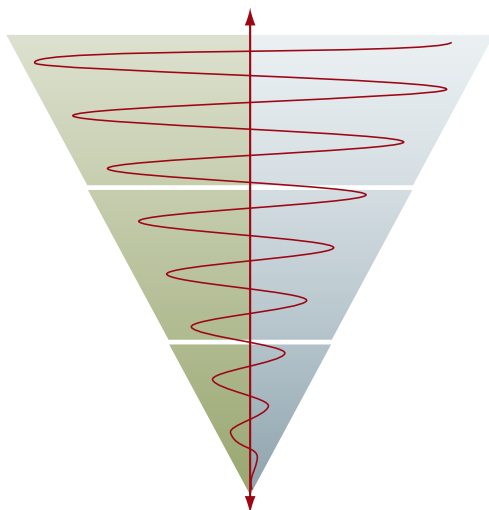
The visuals were an attempt to capture a concept that as yet lacked an articulated theory to legitimize it. A decade later, an article in *Grassroots Development* 2004 supplied a more scientific backdrop. Patrick Breslin’s thought-provoking “Thinking Outside Newton’s Box” weaves insights from chaos theory and complexity studies into new metaphors for understanding grassroots development. The author cites the web of connections that “led IAF staff to design a system for describing the results of projects that encompasses unforeseen outcomes and multiplier effects” by “trying to track intangible results and how a project meant to address a specific problem can be the catalyst for broader changes affecting many more people.” Several articles in this issue make



**Figure A**  
Ideally, grassroots development improves conditions of life for its direct beneficiaries, but also helps strengthen the organizations and foster the policies that make progress sustainable over time.



**Figure B**  
The six "windows" represent a synthesis drawn from years of experience. Impact is densest and most visible at the base and becomes more diffuse in the mid- and upper levels. As examples, Policy Environment is reflected through laws, policies and practices; Community Norms in values, attitudes and relations.



**Figure C**  
Grassroots development is not linear. Interaction among elements depicted by the cone drives the process.

the point. Trace, for example, Cecilia Duque's (see story, page 30) professional path back far enough and you wind up in tiny artisan enclaves where some of Colombia's signature handcrafts were drifting toward oblivion. With IAF funding for small pilot projects, Cecilia began to turn a long-term vision into reality. How many people "benefitted" from that grant awarded 30 years ago? The only number sanctioned by an orthodox data base would be the several dozen artisans directly involved. That number is objective and verifiable. It also fails woefully to convey the real scope of an initiative that eventually touched the

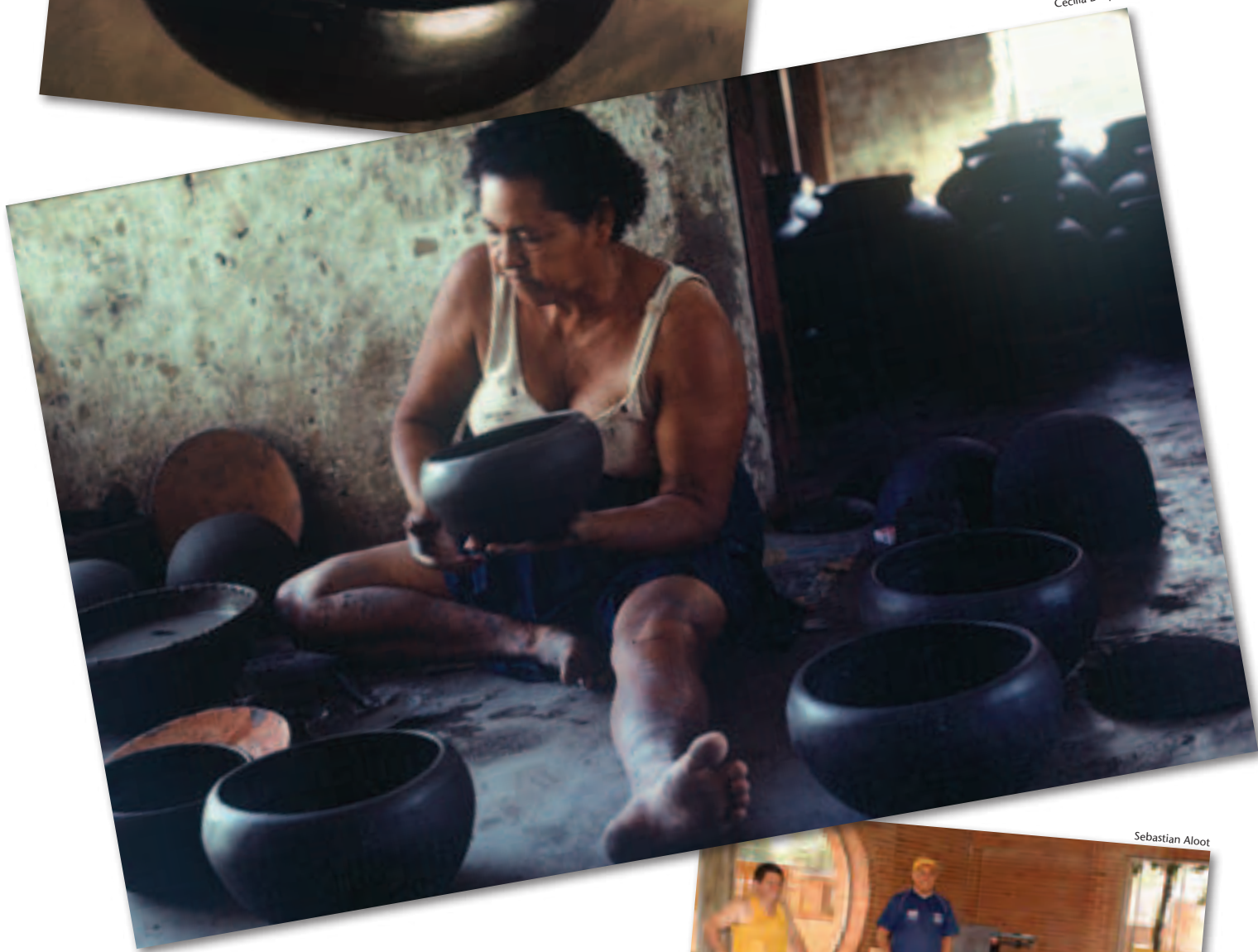
lives of thousands of artisans as Cecilia built on the experience to realize her vision on a far greater scale through Artesanías de Colombia.

### Putting flesh on the Framework

The Grassroots Development Framework, as the cone is officially known, helps recognize these broader impacts and the factors that facilitate or stifle them. The fundamental question in assessing results is not "What are the indicators?" but "What are we trying to measure?". The matter is more complex than it sounds because it goes to the heart



Mark Calcedo



Cecilia Duque

*Long-term results: With its 1977 IAF grant, ACPA trained artisans in La Chamba to refine their pottery. Last December Jairo Sarmiento and Carlos Sánchez packed some 5,000 pieces for shipment to France at Bogotá's new Plaza de los Artesanos. See the story at page 30.*



Sebastian Aloot

of one's definition of development. The six broad windows, or categories, formed by the cone roughly capture IAF's philosophy and organization-centered approach. But to be useful in practice, those categories required definition. What factors or "variables" would one look for to determine, say, organizational health or changes in attitude? IAF staff took a first stab at identifying some. The process of refining them and devising indicators of their occurrence took place in Uruguay, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia and the Dominican Republic in partnership with the experienced local teams who served as project monitors for IAF. Over the course of 18 months, the working groups reached consensus on two dozen key variables—molding in the process a sort of "common language" that facilitated discussion of concepts. Insights of professionals such as Cecilia Zaffaroni, whose work in Uruguay melded years of hands-on experience with a broad theoretical base, were invaluable. Creative juices flowed most freely around the "intangible results," such as cultural identity, vision, attitudes and values, and the quest for proxy indicators of them that are observable and verifiable, if not strictly "measurable."

Field tests in Ecuador and Costa Rica gave us our first reality check, producing some needed changes but also some aha's! The head of the Costa Rica team homed in on the mid-level of the cone, organizational strength and development. "*Allí está el motorcito*," he observed. There's the engine that makes it all work. "This", commented another participant, "is the first time a donor has paid attention to the intangible things. It's a way to give value to what we know intuitively is important but didn't know how to report." As the Grassroots Development Framework caught on, it was enriched by the observations of project monitors as they experimented with it in the field. Those who used the GDF cited its virtues: conceptual clarity, flexibility, vitality and visual representation, and its appeal to grantees, who found it useful for their own purposes. They also noted potential dangers: use as a prescriptive device rather than an organizing principle; rote compliance or "box-checking"; Procrustean bed syndrome, making reality fit into rigid boxes; the temptation to overload the system with indicators.

## Ripple effect

The IAF's attempts to transform the paradigm for documenting results, first made public in "Widening the Lens," an article in *Grassroots Development* of 1993, caught the attention of other organizations. One of the first to approach IAF was its sister agency the African Development Foundation which recognized the relevance of the cone to its programs. "Social Capital, Sustainability and Working Democracy: New Yardsticks for Grassroots Development," published in the 1996 journal, reached a wider audience and prompted readers from as far away as India to share their own writings on the subject. Invitations to speak flowed in from the Peace Corps, Inter-American Development Bank, Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, the University of Texas, the University of Iowa, United States Department of Agriculture and NGO consortia in Colombia.

The GDF was featured at an inter-disciplinary conference on sustainable development at the University of Wageningen, Netherlands, and was the subject of a chapter in the follow-up book *Mediating Sustainability; Building Policy from the Ground Up* (Kumarian Press). IAF's partners published their own books based on the GDF concept and experience. Cecilia Zaffaroni advanced the state of the art with *El Marco de Desarrollo de Base: Un Sistema Participativo para Analizar Resultados de Proyectos Sociales*. Victor Hugo Torres, a consultant on development in Ecuador, produced *El Sistema de Desarrollo Local, SISDEL*. To her great surprise, an IAF representative encountered a group in a remote Guatemalan village making its presentation to a potential donor in the form of the cone.

Meanwhile, back at IAF, the basic intent of the cone as an evolving, adaptable instrument collided with calls for a tightly-structured data base conducive to aggregating numbers and summarizing comparable results. That trend intensified in the mid-1990s; energy was directed to the collection of hard data illustrating tangible results. The GDF name was retained, but by the end of the decade its vision was significantly altered. Variables on the tangible side had multiplied, while those on the intangible side had become diluted. Project monitors focused on outputs reflecting compliance with the specific terms of the grant agreement.



*One of the main inspirations for the GDF was Secretariado de Pastoral Social, a program in rural Santander, Colombia, where a dense network of some 300 grassroots groups and a half-dozen support organizations produced results at multiple levels: increasing production, improving farmers' bargaining power with suppliers and markets, and winning them a voice in policy when a regional leader was appointed to the board of the national agrarian institute.*

### The practitioners' view

As IAF retooled its own system, erstwhile contributors to the Grassroots Development Framework in Latin America continued to experiment. The Federación Nacional de Sordos de Colombia adopted the basic structure but devised variables and indicators meaningful in its context. Emphasis on intangible factors like "attitudes" appealed to the AIDS-prevention organization Fundación de Iniciativas frente al Síndrome de Inmunodeficiencia Adquirida in Ecuador. An indigenous group in Colombia converted the GDF into concentric ellipses, giving it a circular feel more compatible with the world view of its members. In the late 1990's, Jutta Blauart, co-author of the book that resulted from the Netherlands conference, began to apply the Grassroots Development Framework to her field research in Mexico. The need to share experience resulted in a workshop, *Jugando con el Cono*, for professionals working with the GDF throughout

Latin America. The three-day session held in Oaxaca in 1999 attracted some 30 practitioners, several of them former project monitors for the IAF in Uruguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil and host country Mexico. One of the authors of the Grassroots Development Framework was lured out of retirement for the occasion.

Opening presentations ran the gamut from brilliant adaptation and successful use of the GDF to failed application and conceptual critique. Narration of the frustrated attempt by a Colombian NGO to apply the GDF illustrated vividly what can happen if the number of variables and indicators is expanded to the point of unmanagability. Without careful screening of *what is critical* to measure, the process can quickly bog down. There was general agreement that while donor organizations focus on concrete results, the wellspring of energy that generates those results is often found on the intangible side. "We're selling ourselves short" one participant commented, reflecting on the fact that the intangible results are rarely noted or valued in reports and evaluations. Describing her experience with the framework, an IAF project monitor said, "The cone is a prism, enabling us to see a full spectrum of color, where before we saw only the white light." Conversely, for participants passionate about say, the environment, the absence of a sectoral focus proved conceptually insurmountable. Explanation that one *can* group GDF-analyzed projects by sector did not suffice. Virtually everyone complained about lack of feedback from IAF.

All views were explored in greater depth during breakout sessions. Candor made for excellent discussions, and camaraderie laid the groundwork for a network of users. One of the highlights was a brilliant presentation by the Bolivia team which captured the potential of the GDF as a tool for *learning*—for understanding how the elements depicted on the framework relate to one another, and how the dynamic among them affects the outcome of projects. IAF's graphics hint at such relationships (see Figures B and C), but the Bolivians grasped the underlying theory and articulated it with a clarity that had been missing. The team set for itself the ambitious goal of introducing GDF-based monitoring and evaluation as a norm in their country. (Reports from

the team two years later indicated that it had won a contract to adapt the system to government-funded projects in indigenous communities and had been selected to evaluate municipal-level results of a World Bank program.)

As an unintended and disappointing consequence of a schism within the sponsoring organization, the *memoria* summarizing the sessions and extracting conclusions was never published. However, subsequent correspondence among participants yielded the informal tally of experience with the Grassroots Development Framework outlined in the box below.

### Feedback from the Field (1999)

#### Breakthroughs

- Discovery of accomplishments overlooked in the quest for concrete results.
- Legitimacy of “intangible” results.
- Use in tracking process by tracing the interaction among elements of the framework.
- Creative adaptation of the cone to serve local needs and values.
- Validation of outcomes at three levels, making a stronger case for grassroots development.
- Potential for broad application.

#### Problems

- The temptation to overload the system with variables and indicators.
- The lack of an explicit sectoral focus.
- The onward-and-upward bias conveyed by the shape of the cone.\*
- No provision for feedback.

#### Recommendations

- Set data produced by the GDF into context.
- Identify patterns, rather than simply aggregating raw data.
- Be very cautious about attributing results to any given donor.
- Integrate gender into the analysis and address sectoral issues like the environment.
- Keep it simple!

*\* For some, it suggests that the GDF assumes only positive results. This must be addressed, as often more can be learned from failure than from success.*

### Whither the cone?

As originally conceived, the Grassroots Development Framework was an attempt to broaden the lens through which evaluators view a project, to document results that go beyond the conventional headcount or inventory. As Latin Americans adopted and adapted the framework, they have come up with more imaginative applications and potentially more important uses. “Analysing the Cone,” an article produced in 2004 at the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex in England, summarized the promise and the pitfalls:

The Cone has great potential, not simply as a monitoring and evaluation tool, but for use at all stages of the project cycle. In its simplest form, i.e. just by reviewing the six windows, it can be used as an outline for visualising and conceptualising an organisation’s development objectives or direction. The Cone’s greatest value is appreciated if it is employed at all stages, from conceptualisation ... through choosing or designing indicators, monitoring and evaluation and finally feeding back into the planning process. The framework helps ...visualise the strategies of NGOs through highlighting the variables in which they are performing best. This can help the organisations themselves to see more clearly the path they are taking and to adjust it as necessary.

The Cone indicators do not focus, as other evaluation methodologies have done, on short term, bottom-line results .... Rather they highlight the *processes* and *means* of development. This focus on process is important in allowing organisations to pursue long-term goals of poverty alleviation and sustainable development without skewing their activities to meet short term output objectives.

In noting the pitfalls, the Sussex paper hits upon a fundamental dilemma:

The issue of adaptability and versatility of the Cone is ambiguous. The IAF needs a standardised instrument to collect data if it is to obtain comparable information for presentation to its leadership, board and Congress. However, at the country and local level, organisations are encouraged to innovate with the framework to find collection and measurement processes that are meaningful to their beneficiaries and leadership needs. If procedures were to be

standardised for the IAF's benefit, then the flexibility and local adaptation valuable to field users would be forfeited.

Summarizing reports of grantees' experience with GDF procedures through the late 90s, the Sussex researcher noted confusion, technical difficulties, and the weighty investment of time required to enter data into IAF's computerized database. She expressed hope that findings could be shared and analyzed with beneficiaries "in a way that generates discussion and learning".

### Reflections and projections

With time, the cone got mired in the quicksand as surely as other "learning" efforts that preceded it. Much of the struggle, I think, stems from a common root: marriage of the Grassroots Development Framework to the database. At the time the cone was introduced, it was accompanied by a memo urging the IAF to avoid over-complication by distinguishing carefully between the "essential minimum" needs for data to be standardized and computerized for reporting purposes, and the kinds of information better suited to collection and analysis by field staff in a more flexible format.

A glance at the 127-page Manual of Operations for Data Verifiers and the 40-page Summary Charts currently in use by the IAF makes one wonder if it might be time for an amicable divorce that would free up both the data base and the GDF. The two are complementary and both are necessary but, in my opinion, they don't make compatible bedfellows. If each did the task it is designed for, a streamlined data base could produce the set of standardized indicators and aggregatable numbers the IAF needs for dissemination and accountability. The Grassroots Development Framework could regain its balance between tangible and intangible results *and* its flexibility to deal with the manifestly unstandardized reality of the field. Freed from the rigors of the data base, the

GDF could serve its primary purpose of lifting sights from the concrete to the institutional and policy realms. It could help focus on the "long-term, strategic benefits for the poor" cited by the chair of the IAF's board of directors in the annual report for 2007.

### Dreams for what could be

In his article, Patrick Breslin noted, "With different metaphors, the focus would be much broader than the scorecard or checklist [of goals]. It would expand to encompass what happens on the *way* to the goals. We would still have numbers, but we would pay more attention to stories." While managers worship at the altar of statistics, stories are what move people, including politicians and policy-makers. The problem has been that stories are too easily dismissed as anecdotal or, conversely, they are projected larger than life. An original intent of the Grassroots Development Framework was to give context and perspective to the real-life stories at the heart of the IAF's work. Narratives can be more than "just anecdotes" if they are representative of a broader universe of projects with similar characteristics and outcomes.

The Inter-American Foundation has made a good start along those lines with its Results Report. The 2007 report profiles a specific grant in each of its sections, lending a human dimension to the charts and tables. Ideally, that format could be taken to the next plane, to focus on *how* as well as *how many*, to discern similar processes underlying seemingly disparate projects, to learn more about the relationship among context, strategy, results and sustainability over time. If the GDF can be used to identify broad patterns and trends, it might shed light on the perennial questions: "What works and what doesn't?" and "Why?"

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*Marion Ritchey Vance, who retired from the IAF in 1995 after 22 years of service, pioneered the Grassroots Development Framework.*

# Update on Measurement

The Inter-American Foundation has embraced the Grassroots Development Framework pioneered by Marion Ritchey Vance in coordination with professionals from across the hemisphere. It is introduced to each grantee during an orientation visit preceding the first disbursement of our funding. At that meeting, our staff reviews the requirements set forth in the agreement between the IAF and the grantee, which include regular reporting, and works with the grantee to identify the indicators that will gauge its progress. Technicians under contract to the IAF (data-verifiers) visit the grantee every six months, confirm the grantee's representations through on-site interviews and observation, and prepare a report. A section in each GDF report includes suggestions from grantees and data-verifiers for improving the GDF. Since 1999, all data reported over the fiscal year have been aggregated and compiled into the IAF's Results Report.

Application of the GDF positioned the IAF to respond readily and effectively when mandatory reporting for United States government agencies became more rigorous and comprehensive beginning in the mid-1990s. Specifically the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) require the IAF to provide reliable data, usually numerical, to the United States Congress and the Office of Management and Budget. The IAF itself relies on numbers as significant indicators of the early returns on its investment, although numbers recede in importance over time as other results, described in Ritchey Vance's article, become evident. Note that the IAF's funding flows over a short term, usually between three to five years, and we must monitor compliance with what the grantee proposed to undertake, the reason for the funding in the first place. Information captured by numbers is useful in this work, and it is supplemented by a narrative for each indicator. The GDF reminds us that the early numbers don't necessarily reflect the true value of our investment—its full impact on develop-

ment—which often unfolds well after our funding and monitoring have ceased.

As Ritchey Vance and her team did, the IAF continues to refine the GDF. Independently of the 1999 meeting in Oaxaca, we reached some of the same conclusions, and we have acted on them. For example, the IAF shares its reports with all grantees. (In fact, grantees are using their verified results to assess their project and in applications to other donors.) Additionally, data is collected with a gender breakdown. More recently, we added indicators on work with disabled beneficiaries and the impact of our funding on infrastructure (including environmental protection). The GDF has been adapted to projects co-funded with corporate foundations. It has been updated for easier entry of information. We can now show progress over time and toward goals and show the inclusion of African descendents, indigenous and young people. Feedback from our grantees and data-verifiers helps us modify indicators. After they have been tested for a year, we review changes at annual conferences with data-verifiers. The GDF is now available in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Creole and English.

Interest in this tool continues. The IAF shares it with other organizations and welcomes feedback. Recently one agency invited a data-verifier to explain the GDF to its staff in four Central American countries. He reported that his audience was impressed that the GDF captures both narrative and quantitative information. It's important to remember the GDF is not the IAF's only gauge of performance and results. Final records include extensive input from auditors, grantees, Foundation representatives and others. The IAF hopes to gain a longer-term perspective through evaluations conducted several years after funding has ceased that may reveal unexpected outcomes. Articles in the IAF's journal have reported such accomplishments for several decades.—*Rosemarie Moreken, IAF analysis and evaluation specialist*



*Not long ago, Cecilia Duque Duque, one of the world's foremost authorities on folk arts, was named among the 100 most influential Colombian women in the 20th century, a distinction she richly deserves. She is the driving force behind the rescue and refinement of Colombia's handicraft tradition and the development of an infrastructure that allows 350,000 Colombians to pursue their livelihood with dignity and thrive in an ever more complex market. Marion Ritchey Vance, the IAF representative who made the all-important decision to support Duque's initial effort in the 1970s, leads off this section with her account of a woman on a mission and the ongoing returns on the IAF's investment in her ideas and hard work.*



Mitchell Denberg



*Cecilia Duque at APCA in the 1970s  
and at Plaza de los Artesanos in 2008.*

## Cecilia Duque Duque: **Crafting an Industry**

*By Marion Ritchey Vance*

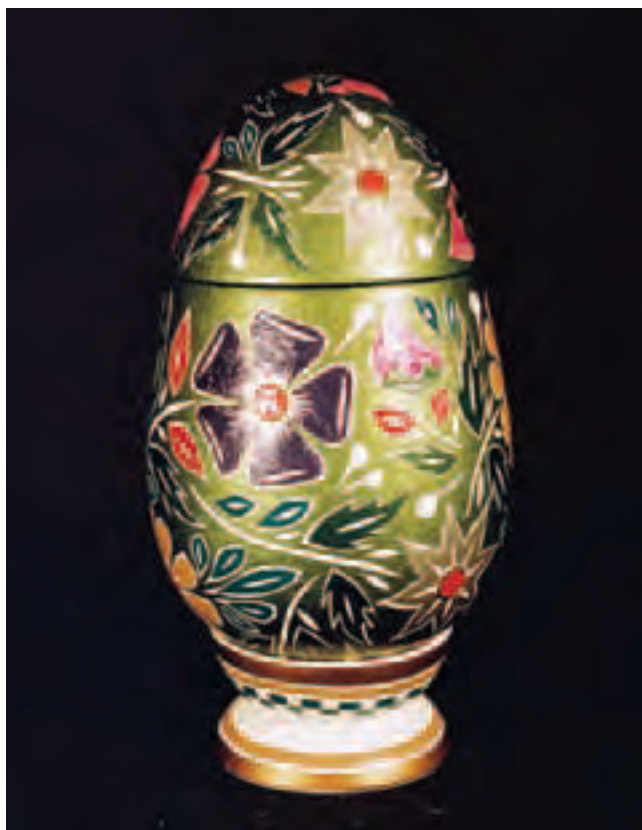
I was introduced to Cecilia Duque, or rather to Cecilia's vision, in 1972; it was another four years before I met her in person. As the new Latin America director for an NGO, I had traveled to Colombia for orientation. Straight from the Bogotá airport, staff swept me off to be immersed in Colombian culture at the Museo de Artes y Tradiciones Populares. The museum was housed in the former Claustro de San Agustín, a centuries-old colonial building in the historic heart of Bogotá. In the 1960s, the crumbling structure had been slated for the wreckers' ball. How it escaped that fate to become an architectural showpiece and home to a

dazzling array of folk art has everything to do with Cecilia Duque Duque.

Early in 1970, young Cecilia had signed on as secretary to the Asociación Colombiana de Promoción Artesanal (ACPA), an organization representing women throughout the country who were dedicated to preserving and promoting the artistic traditions unique to each state. While still struggling with the rudiments of her new job, Cecilia foresaw that the grand old Claustro could become what the Asociación was seeking—a showcase in the capital for the folk culture of Colombia. "As always seems to happen in my life," she explained later, "I could envision



Barniz de Pasto: Artist Gilberto Granja, one of ACPA's early beneficiaries, painstakingly overlays wood carvings with resin from the mopa-mopa plant.



Mark Caicedo



Sebastian Aloat

a project, a museum. I was looking 20 years out. I wasn't thinking about how I was going to get through the day, how I was going to learn to write a letter or take minutes." Cecilia's vision matured into a life-long campaign to elevate the status of Colombia's traditional arts which she felt had long been undervalued in the sophisticated circles of the capital. Through a combination of charm, energy, innate political savvy and sheer force of will, she orchestrated the process which culminated in the gem that opened my eyes to the rich diversity that is Colombia.

I can only imagine the effort that went into restoring the Claustro whose four sides surround a cobble-stone courtyard with a portico supported by massive stone pillars. What greeted me as I emerged from the arched entryway was sunlight and color. Red geraniums in great clay pots graced each column and a fountain sparkled at the center. Artfully arrayed carts, wagons and dugout canoes occupied the space under the portico. Large ground-floor rooms housed an inviting restaurant and a gift shop offering the best of traditional Colombian fare and folk art. On the second floor, arts and crafts were arranged by region. As intended, I took away a mental map of Colombia, imprinted with the sights, sounds and textures of a dozen distinct cultures.\*

Fast forward to 1976 when, as the Inter-American Foundation's representative for Colombia, I hosted a Colombian colleague from the Organization of American States at the IAF's Arlington headquarters. She still reminds me that her agenda was eclipsed by the woman who accompanied her—Cecilia Duque. Here was the person who had wrought miracles to bring about the Museo and had become its director, and I wanted to know more. She did not disappoint. Cecilia radiates confidence and vision; she is a born advocate. Before I quite knew it, the visit had turned into a proposal for funding.

At the time Colombia was still characterized by small towns with a single signature craft. Typically, workmanship was excellent, organization and marketing less so. Cecilia had embarked on a year's journey by bus, canoe and foot to get to know Colombia's folk artists, their families, their communities

and their needs as *they* saw them. In 1977, IAF awarded \$154,870 to the Asociación Colombiana de Promoción Artesanal for an outreach program based on those needs. The grant funded on-the-ground assistance for traditional artisans in four areas as distinct ethnically as they are distant geographically: Pasto, known for its unique *barniz*, or lacquer work; Morroa, famous for woven hammocks; Guacamayas, where artisans fashioned goods out of fiber from the ubiquitous *fique* plant; and the Chocó, home to striking, water-tight *güérregue* basketry.

In each case, organization was key to improving market potential but the road to stable, viable organizations is full of twists and turns. Some groups were frustratingly slow to mature; others prospered early, but faltered in later years. Most eventually evolved and, over time, produced benefits. Several recorded spectacular gains in membership and income. The project had its ups and downs, but it gave the ACPA's dedicated volunteers and museum staff just what they needed: the understanding and the credibility that come from first-hand experience with the art *and* the artisan and with the factors that were contributing to the demise of traditional crafts.

Fast forward again, to 1990, when newly-elected President César Gaviria took note of the Museo and how it had improved artisans' lives through better organization and smarter marketing. On the advice of his minister of economic development, the president tapped Cecilia Duque to direct Artesanías de Colombia, the somewhat lackluster agency within the development ministry charged with aiding artisans. She transformed the place—not without ruffling feathers, stepping on toes, and taking on sacred cows, but ultimately winning support and respect. "I didn't think about tomorrow; I thought about 10 years from now," she reflected. What gets her past "tomorrow" and to her goal is total dedication, an ability to work from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. and the inner serenity to detach herself from the small fire storms that flare up in her wake. Testimony to Cecilia's success is her tenure as head of Artesanías under four presidents and eight cabinet ministers of opposing political stripes.

Cecilia and her handpicked Artesanías staff began by respecting artisans and their skills and by introducing ways to broaden the appeal of their

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\* The Museo closed its doors in 2006, when ACPA disbanded. The collection has been placed in provincial museums throughout Colombia.)



traditional crafts, following the successful approach of the Museo. For example, the colorful hammocks of Morroa are prized but one lasts a lifetime, so the market is limited. Cecilia had helped weavers envision other uses for the same cloth, beginning with pillow covers and upholstery. When the shallow baskets used to weigh wool on traditional scales in Guacamayas became obsolete, ACPA designer Ligia de Wiesner worked with craftswomen to transfer familiar skills and raw materials to decorative items with new market appeal. In Ráquira, where scores of backyard kilns fire earthenware vessels, artisans researched ancestral designs which turned everyday pottery—superseded by plastic—into place settings for fine dining and *objets d'art* for upscale homes.

The idea of modifying a product to boost sales is not new. Peace Corps volunteers and others encouraged it, *but* often with the focus on a mass market, usually foreign. Colombians love to cite the example of craftsmen dutifully turning out figurines of Mickey Mouse. But the point of the approach pioneered by the Museo, and expanded upon by Artesanías de Colombia, was to improve and adapt products while maintaining their inherent qualities, and to aim high. “We can’t compete in chain stores; hand-crafting takes too much time and skill,” Cecilia explained. “But we can tap into niche markets where quality commands fair prices.”

Ironically, it is Cecilia’s fascination with the latest technical developments that has helped preserve the most traditional of handcrafts. Under her leadership, Artesanías de Colombia pioneered the use of technology to share information, create markets, decentralize resources, offer training and enable artisans to experiment. Using plain old-fashioned personal contact, Cecilia developed supportive relationships with state and local authorities, educators, businesses, academia and international institutions such as the OAS and the World Crafts Council.

Artesanías de Colombia has trademarked its name and logo and instituted the *sello de calidad*, a certification that qualifies handcrafted products for favorable export duties and, if the country of destination has an agreement with Colombia, reduced import taxes. Cecilia has broached the concepts of intellectual property and copyright protection, as they pertain to



Mark Caicedo

With its IAF grant, ACPA taught women in Guacamayas to fashion large decorative baskets using their technique for making alpargatas, above.

artisans, with Colombian government officials and at the international level. These topics are also touched upon in training courses so that craftsmen become aware that they have certain rights and that recourse is available to defend them.

One of Cecilia's major innovations is ExpoArtesanías, the annual winter crafts extravaganza now an institution in Bogotá. For *bogotanos* and foreign shoppers it is the event that kicks off the Christmas season. Hundreds of artisans from all over Colombia exhibit juried wares at this *feria* extending over 20,000 square meters in the heart of the city. To those who see imposition of high standards for participation as elitist, Cecilia replies that artists who aspire to make the cut will upgrade their products and, ultimately, their incomes.

To cultivate pride in Colombia's heritage, Cecilia campaigned steadily to lend cachet to *la artesanía*. Well-to-do Colombians, whose taste tended toward the continental or the cosmopolitan, have responded. As a result, Colombian crafts are no longer considered suitable only for decorating the *finca*, or country house. In keeping with her long-term vision for the potential of Colombia's artisan sector, Cecilia took cues from success abroad. She identified P.J. Arañador, an internationally-acclaimed Philippine designer who had aptly defined his country's "style" by drawing from its folk art and traditions. "If he was the wizard," Cecilia resolved, "I was going to bring him here." Under contract with Artesanías de Colombia, Arañador worked with designers and craftsmen to select the colors, textures, materials and themes that defined the Colombia Look in home décor. It was first introduced in the form of La Casa Colombiana—model spaces completely furnished with products designed and produced by the nation's artisans. The rooms were exhibited at ExpoArtesanías, and featured in a publication put out yearly by Artesanías. A fine example of their elegance and sophistication can be found in the Presidential Salon, a VIP room in Cartagena's new convention center, where the flooring, furniture, and draperies were crafted by Colombian artisans.

Another of Cecilia's coups was the incorporation of hand-crafted textiles, motifs, and accessories into the world of haute couture. It took four years



Sebastian Alot



Pavilion and güerregue stand at ExpoArtesanías.

*On the runway in Milan, Italy:  
Colombian designs incorporating  
high fashion and crafts.*



of lobbying, and help from First Lady Lina María de Uribe and the Instituto para la Exportación y Moda, to get artisans and Bogotá fashion designers working together on collections to be modeled at Colombia Moda, the country's most exclusive annual fashion event. The success of the 2003 debut was not lost on the head of the Italian Chamber of Fashion who happened to be in the audience. At his invitation, the styles traveled to Milan for a second showcasing. "It was spectacular," Cecilia recalled. "A boom was launched and the work of artisans in fashion took off." (The Colombians have since returned twice to Milan.) Such a bold endeavor required, as Cecilia notes, "synergy among designers, artisans, business leaders, politicians and high society." It popularized the concept of "Colombian identity," opened lucrative opportunities and was, according to the author of a book on style, a watershed in the history of fashion in Colombia.

In 2006, Cecilia announced her retirement from Artesanías de Colombia. The summary of accomplishments in her final report, for which she was quick to credit her "highly competent and committed team of professionals," is dizzying. While the course Cecilia charted for the institution has not sat well with everyone, what is beyond doubt is that a dying heritage gained new life and thousands of artisans are earning a decent living from it. These achievements have been recognized in Colombia and abroad. In 1997, UNESCO presented Artesanías de Colombia with its highest honor, the Medalla de Oro Pablo Picasso. ExpoArtesanías earned the Colombian Premio Nacional de Alta Gerencia. And as Cecilia stepped down from her post, President Alvaro Uribe honored her with Colombia's prestigious Medalla al Mérito Cultural.

Despite the fuss, Cecilia remains disarmingly down to earth. Asked how she would direct her remarkable energy, drive and vision after she retired, she replied with a grin, "To work with artisans of course. That's the only thing I know how to do."

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*Marion Ritchey Vance was IAF representative for Colombia from 1974 to 1979 and later director for the Andean region and director of learning. She retired from the IAF in 1995.*



# Q and A with Cecilia Duque

**G**rassroots Development visited Cecilia Duque in December 2008 to update the record. We learned that Duque's role in creating ACPA's Museo caught the eye of the Ford Foundation which underwrote a Master's program tailor-made for her, blending courses in economics and the arts, at Pennsylvania State University. During her five-year stay in the U.S., Duque took on a study of Latin American crafts for the Organization of American States; just before she returned home, she was introduced to Marion Ritchey Vance. Between 1977 and 1984, the IAF awarded three grants to ACPA and one to the barnizadores of Pasto, whom ACPA had helped organize into a pre-cooperative. In 1995, Duque received the IAF's Dante Fascell Inter-American Fellowship, a grant created to support outstanding grassroots leaders and help disseminate their successful approaches to alleviating poverty. ACPA's IAF-funded work was profiled in Grassroots Development in 1990, and as a Fascell Fellow Duque wrote on the role of handicrafts in development in the 1996 journal. We have excerpted below some of the insights shared during our most recent inquiry into her uninterrupted dedication to the sector she helped build.

## **What attracted you to crafts?**

The aesthetics. And the artisans—where all that creativity comes from, how they come up with the ideas, how they make things work.

## **How big is Colombia's handicraft industry?**

Not long ago someone else asked me this question. I said, "If you're speaking in terms of equipment and machinery, it is the most incipient sector in the country, but if you're speaking in terms of hands working, it's the largest sector." In terms of income, the sector represents 0.04 percent of GDP. That's a small amount in the general context, but it's a big amount for the artisans.

## **How are the artisans doing?**

On a scale of 1 to 100, they are now at about 50 percent of their potential. If we continue our work, they could progress another 20 or 30 percent. And I think the dynamics of the market have improved their living conditions considerably. Colombian society

recognizes, appreciates and identifies with our wealth of handicrafts. Fifteen years ago that wasn't the case. For quality and design, our handicrafts hold their own anywhere, but Colombian labor is expensive and that makes them less competitive abroad economically. China, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia have equally nice handicrafts that sell for much less.

## **So how are exports going?**

Well, when I left Artesanías, exports for the entire crafts sector had gone from \$30 million to \$70 million. So they have increased considerably, but it's domestic sales that have really grown. I've always thought that we weren't ready to get involved in massive exports. We have to innovate for the Colombian market, to make traditional products adapted to new uses.

## **You said that your focus eventually shifted from the artisans to their products.**

The main focus of the IAF-funded projects was to organize the artisans—into cooperatives, associations, partnership mechanisms. If the artisans weren't organized, it was going to be impossible to organize production or perfect the product. But because 90 percent of their work is done by hand, our artisans can't produce volume. When I saw that reality years ago, I said: "We have only one route: to compete through innovation and by differentiating our product." The artisans needed to perfect their product, improve it, redesign it. So that became the emphasis and we have raised the level of innovation and design a great deal.

## **Your work continued long after IAF ceased to fund ACPA. What was the impact of IAF's support?**

IAF support was defining in my life. It was the starting point, the spearhead for my work at Artesanías de Colombia. What I am doing today and everything that I have done I owe to the IAF—and to the Ford Foundation grant.

## **You have written about "design laboratories" you set up. What were these?**

The laboratories set up in three areas—Bogotá, Pasto and the coffee zone—were conceived as strategic

units, supported by Artesanías de Colombia and by local resources from the mayor's office, the chamber of commerce, the artisans themselves. They have three goals: to keep handicraft work alive through research, new technologies and by learning how things were done in the past; second, to acquire detailed knowledge of the production side of the crafts sector; and third, marketing. Each unit determines who is working in the sector in its region, what they are doing, where they are, how they are organized. Then it tailors workshops for the artisans on what the trends are, how to use technology, how they can improve their work—the elements of the synergy required to turn out the competitive products that can help the sector take off.

### **Tell us about introducing a corps of designers into this work.**

We have had up to 80 traveling throughout the country. The designers were reluctant to work with indigenous people and *campesinos* at first, but when we managed to bring them and artisans together a synergy resulted and new ideas flourished. And this brings up an important point. Most designers are trained in universities to design blenders, freezers, aircraft parts; design students don't study how to support the 70 percent of Colombia's output that comes from microenterprises and handicraft workers. I wanted to help designers learn about the potential for developing these products. They know more now, and they can see niches for work with handicrafts. And, something that didn't happen before, the artisan has begun to inquire about the trend for the coming year. The designer and the artisan are working together to build this industry.

### **What about your year on the IAF's Fascell Scholarship?**

That was the opportunity of a lifetime. The IAF put out a call for proposals and I responded by proposing

Cecilia Duque



a strategy that involved developing and accelerating the creative process by using the Internet as a tool to let the artisan experiment. The award was \$50,000 that I could use as I wanted. I stepped back from Artesanías de Colombia to dedicate one year exclusively to the work the scholarship funded. I read some 150 books on artisan work around the world; I did anthropological research: I made trips paid for with my own resources.

All of this allowed us to put together a Web site which the Inter-American Development Bank helped Artesanías de Colombia get up and running. We selected artisans that had had some schooling and coordinated their instruction in computer systems and computer literacy with the National Training Service (SENA). We arranged access to computers with chambers of commerce in departments throughout Colombia, and sat down with the artisans at the computer. By using the site, they can connect with designers to help develop their products.

### **If you could choose one achievement you are especially proud of, what would it be?**

Impressing people with the importance of innovation and design. A great thinker once said "He who doesn't move forward, moves backward, and he who doesn't grow, fades away." The world revolves around innovation and design.—P.D.

# Indelible Imprints

“**Y**ou’ve left an indelible imprint here,” said Bogotá architect Harry Child to Cecilia Duque when the two spotted each other in the crowd of shoppers at ExpoArtesanías in December. “This is Cecilia’s work,” he explained with a gesture that took in the entire emporium sprawling around us. “and look at what it is today.”

ExpoArtesanías is the largest handicraft fair in Latin America and one of the world’s finest showcases of folk arts. Last year, some 2,000 organizations of craftspeople competed for the 850 stands on the grounds maintained by the prestigious Centro Internacional de Negocios y Exposiciones (CORFERIAS). Pride in making the cut is palpable. Those who aren’t selected are eligible for assistance to prepare for the next round, a boost that makes the competition stiffer as time goes by. The individuals sent from every corner of Colombia to set up shop at ExpoArtesanías represent legions of artisans in cooperatives and craftmaking communities, according to Lucy Cajiao de Ruán, who directed the event for 12 years before retiring. “Even those who aren’t here are present,” she put it, “and presence in this space allows their work to be valued. Cecilia Duque made this happen.”

Not too far away in Parque Simón Bolívar, the impressive Plaza de los Artesanos echoes Duque’s determination to dignify Colombian craftspeople. Duque told *Grassroots Development* that when she arrived at Artesanías de Colombia, she brought with her “a little idea” for a place where they could learn, experiment and display their products. She held out for its location in a site she calls “the heart of Bogotá, where the city palpitates.” Covering 37,000 square meters of this prime property, in which the city of Bogotá granted Artesanías de Colombia a life estate, the facility boasts eight exhibit areas, meeting rooms with connections for 120 computers, a food court for 180 diners, parking for 230 vehicles, an outdoor performing space that can accommodate an audience of 10,000 people standing, warehouses, an auditorium and offices for a surprisingly small administrative staff. “The idea was to make the space profitable as soon as it could be used,” said

Plaza director Lyda del Carmen Díaz. That means that in between workshops and quarterly craft fairs, the installations are rented out for uses that range from automobile shows to rock concerts.

But when *Grassroots Development* was in Bogotá, ExpoArtesanías was where the action was. Crafts representing the splendor of Colombia’s eclectic heritage filled eight pavilions with a dazzling array of colors, textures, forms and flavors. (Even the food had been juried.) Banners inscribed with *Moda* and *Mesa* floated next to the largest structures, indicating the treasures within; the smallest was designated “Fine and Costume Jewelry.” The event is always timed to open in early December and close a few days after salaried Colombians receive their Christmas bonus. Vendors swear everything sells out—from inexpensive ceramic mugs to the pricy coats signed by Adriana Santacruz, a designer hailed for her elaborate use of hand-woven fabrics from an indigenous community located near her home in Pasto. Sales revenues, up steadily since 1991, totaled \$5.5 million in 2006, the most recent figures available. That’s just the tip of the income iceberg for those artisans who use their stand as a springboard to a permanent sales outlet in the Colombian capital or who land orders from buyers scouting the pavilions for merchandise.

What we saw when we visited made accounts of the struggle to organize the artisans involved in ACPA’s IAF-funded projects of 25 or 30 years ago seem extremely remote. The group in el Chocó, for example, had grown from 100 to 3,000 members from diverse communities. That region was particularly well represented at ExpoArtesanías by numerous stands in a large section of a pavilion grouping indigenous and Afro-Colombian crafts. At one of them, Henry Donisabe was in charge of his Woonán community’s *giüérregue* output for the entire year, including oversized pieces going for \$1,000, an innovation Duque had suggested. “We are talking about 100 artisans who work as a collective,” he explained, adding that half their annual income came from handicrafts and the rest from agriculture, hunting

and fishing. In the pavilion called “Tradition and Evolution,” Omayra Manrique recounted how ACPA had started from scratch in Guacamayas, Boyacá, in the early 1980s with just five women, including herself. Their *alpargatas* and baskets for measuring on old-fashioned scales had become obsolete, but under ACPA’s guidance the women updated their craft and formed Cooperativa Creatividad Artística (CREARCOOP). It now has 300 members.

When Cecilia Duque visits ExpoArtesanías, she is stopped at almost every step by patrons and artisans alike. Most people call her *doctora*. (Her academic background includes graduation from the elite program for top-flight corporate executives offered by INALDE, the Management and Business School of the Universidad de la Sabana, where she is now one of three women in senior management.) She seems to know every artisan by name as well as their spouses and children; she can tell you whose children saw a future in crafts and are following in their parents’ footsteps and whose children are becoming the first university graduates in their family. To accompany Duque to the fairgrounds—or to Plaza de los Artesanos—is to understand that, as impressive as the merchandise, organizations, institutions and bricks-and-mortar are, her most significant imprint has been on people’s lives.

This was confirmed by Carlos Delgado, a craftsman-entrepreneur who processes *toquilla* palm fronds (commonly, *palma de iraca*) and uses the material in the hand-made products his wife designs. He began working with Duque 30 years ago through ACPA, when, with its second IAF grant, the organization expanded its work into Nariño, where the couple still resides. He and his wife, Delgado said, were “just scraping by” then, “stuck on making placemats and hats.” Through Duque, they diversified; today they employ workers from 80 families—everyone at ExpoArtesanías referred to the labor force in terms of families—each one earning the minimum wage or better. “*La doctora* is the one who made this fair a success,” Delgado insisted, “and the impact for us has been huge. The fair has given our handicrafts status and has changed the system. Now we have clients throughout Colombia and abroad who keep us busy year round. Like I said, we sent our children to school with this work. One is a medical doctor and the other



Sebastian Albot



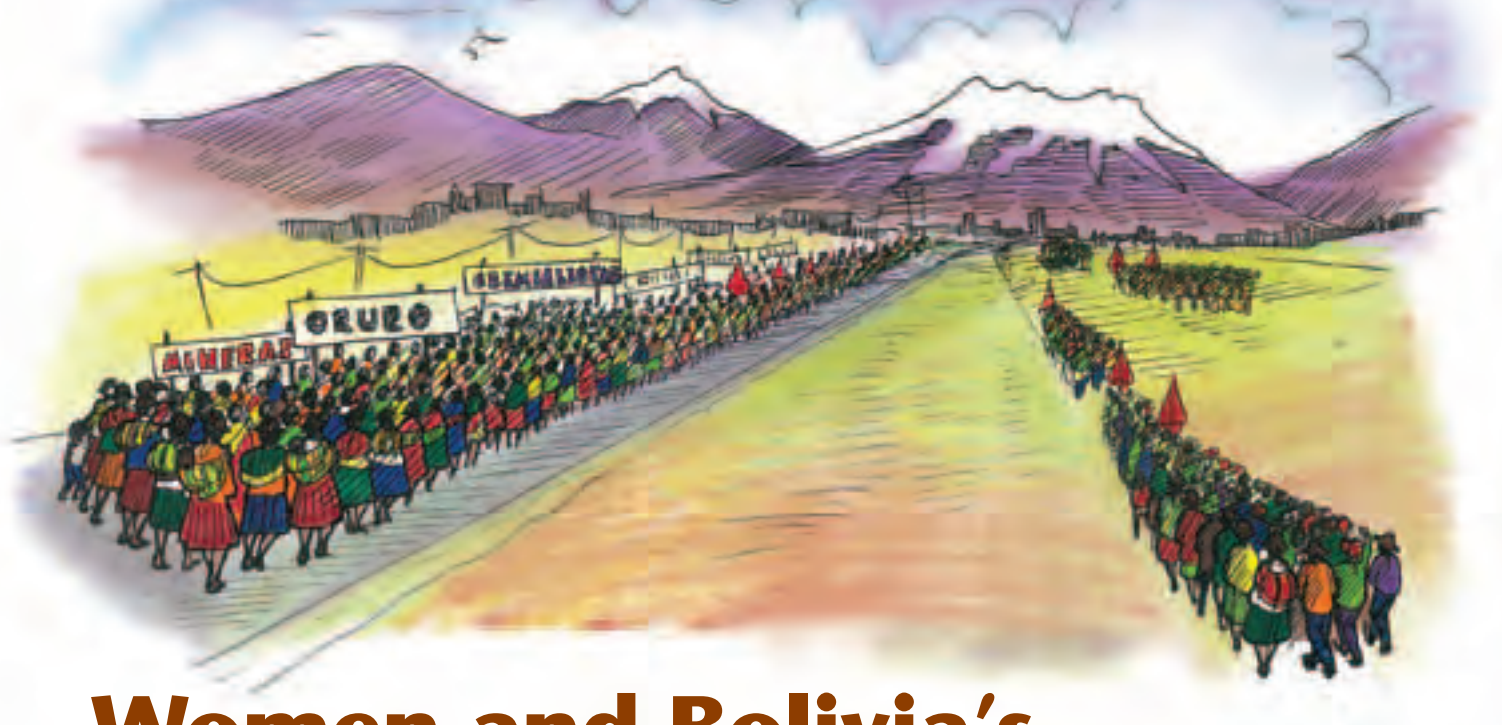
Mark Calcedo

Since appearing on the runway in Milan, the hat from Aguadas has been a popular item. “Can we live from this? *Sí señora*,” said Luz Stella Candamil Giraldo, one of the hatmakers whose ancestors originated the style some 130 years ago.

just finished a degree in international business. We fought hard to get where we are.”

In character, Duque had been inspecting Delgado’s inventory during our interview, and before we left, she advised him to make his baskets larger and put a framework inside to hold the shape. Said Cajiao de Ruán, “In terms of Cecilia Duque’s work, I would confirm what the artisans have told you: it’s about promoting the product. But when you promote the product, you’re not just helping the trade or improving the market, you are promoting a better life for the artisans. That’s what is important.”—P.D.

*"The women of Oruro marched for a constitutional assembly that considered their rights."*



## Women and Bolivia's New Constitution

By Kevin Healy

*For more than 25 years, Bolivian women have been playing games on the altiplano at 13,000 feet above sea level. But these games are serious. Developed by IAF grantee Centro de Capacitación Integral de la Mujer Campesina (CCIMCA) to deal with literacy, ethnic identity, civics and political economy, they were designed to stimulate critical thinking that would lead to positive change in rural communities.*

*CCIMCA was founded in 1982 by Evelyn Barrón and Rita Murillo, both social workers determined to pursue development on their own terms in the department of Oruro. After some initial setbacks, CCIMCA found its footing, inspired by the pioneering Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the concepts he detailed in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Key to their success were the drawings of Germán Treviño, an artist on staff. From them CCIMCA devised exercises, including the games, that brought to life courses in health, nutrition, horticulture, leadership and contemporary political issues and helped women in more*

*than 70 communities articulate their hardships and how to address them.*

*CCIMCA's workshops prompted women to ask questions, analyze problems and propose solutions—good preparation for moving into local leadership positions and running for public office. Several former trainees became the first indigenous women elected to Bolivia's congress. CCIMCA has shared its successful approach with the Bolivian offices of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, the European Union and Caritas. It was featured along with the Grameen Bank and other stellar grassroots organizations in *Local Heroes, Global Change*, an award-winning series that has been televised in Europe, Japan and the United States since its release in 1990. In celebration of the IAF's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Kevin Healy updates us on CCIMCA and its methods and accomplishments that were themselves cause for celebration when he first wrote about them in *Grassroots Development 1991* on the occasion of IAF's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

For first half of the first decade of the 21st century, Bolivia was swept up in a frenzy of political and social mobilization. Its indigenous majority in particular was clamoring for social justice, full citizenship and state control over the country's abundant natural resources. Mobilization threw into political relief Bolivia's profound inequalities—the worst in Latin America—and the failure of the neoliberal economic model. The relentless barrage of protests, although marred by several episodes of violence, reached a crescendo in 2005 with the election of Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, and a victory for his upstart party, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS).

For many poor indigenous Bolivians, this outcome signaled a new threshold after 500 years of systematic exclusion from public life. Diverse social movements representing a broad swath of the population—male and female, rural and urban, middle-class and poor—coalesced to demand a new constitution that the Bolivian people would draft. These forces pushed Morales to campaign on this issue, and he embraced it. As president, he made clear his intent to make a new constitution the cornerstone of his administration's commitment to sweeping change. Civil society institutions were also bubbling over with initiatives and ideas to get the drafting process rolling. The expectation was that a new constitution would embrace a spectrum of rights heretofore denied to many citizens and would help Bolivia move toward social justice and broader political participation.

CCIMCA, which since 1999 had moved its women's workshops from the countryside into the city of Oruro, plunged into this process. Its lively and colorful training in civic education conducted in an unpretentious facility in the center of Oruro engaged hundreds of the women eking out a living in the informal sector. Many belonged to *juntas vecinales*, or neighborhood associations, usually male-dominated, in Oruro's three major barrios. CCIMCA would now turn its focus toward their engagement in articulating their demands and working for their incorporation in the new constitution.

As it had for years, CCIMCA would deploy Germán Treviño's drawings to stimulate reflection and analysis on the condition of women and the

misuse of power. The illustrations depicted a wide range of problems that women faced and ways to ameliorate and even transform them. Treviño has always been careful to draw the images in consultation with the *compañeras*, often redoing them to everyone's satisfaction. By putting together the narrative expressed by each series, women in Oruro's villages recognized episodes from their own lives and began discussing them freely and authoritatively.

CCIMCA's short-term goal was to enable marginalized women to move into positions on boards providing oversight of male-dominated city councils and the above-referenced *juntas vecinales*—an approach that faced huge challenges in a patriarchal culture resistant to change. To strengthen its hand, CCIMCA began using the Foro Ciudadano Municipal, a public place to air grievances and propose reforms, which brought together *juntas vecinales*. CCIMCA also organized a local chapter of AMPUIE, a women's Bolivian advocacy network. This infused the Foro with vitality and transformed it into a dynamic platform for debate and mobilization around pressing social issues. The women learned to shape their issues to win public support and persuade municipal authorities. Marches followed as well as campaigns to raise awareness of women's rights and educate the public on domestic and other violence directed against women. CCIMCA and AMPUIE's effectiveness was demonstrated in a new tilt in municipal budgets toward plans for two new hospitals, one specializing in maternal and child services, the first of its kind in Oruro. Funds were also allocated to other notable firsts: a volleyball league for girls, support for children with disabilities and health programs targeting cervical cancer. The debate in AMPUIE turned to penal reform and led to the imposition of more stringent sentences for those found guilty of crimes involving domestic violence.

The process of grassroots constitution-making got underway with the passage of a law convoking a constitutional assembly in 2003, and it formally ended with a nationwide referendum in early 2009. Women trained in CCIMCA's workshops and in the revitalized Foro were in the streets early on in massive marches for the enshrinement of their rights and those of others. From the outset, CCIMCA navigated a steady



Fernando Soria

CCIMCA workshop using Germán Treviño's drawings.

*"Learning about the old constitution."*



bottom-up course enabling women to participate in focused discussions while channeling their ideas and aspirations into an agenda on women's rights that was spreading across Bolivia. In addition to Treviño's vivid illustrations, its immersion workshops on constitutional reform relied on an examination of the actual constitution then in force. "It was obvious that the *compañeras* had never held a copy of the constitution in their hands, not even to flip through its pages," said Natividad Salas, a CCIMCA trainer. She added that the exercise made the women aware of the old constitution's strengths as well as of its silence on women's rights. Why, they asked, is drafting such a fundamental document the privileged province of lawyers and politicians? Why is it beyond the control of common folk like themselves? This was a good place to start formulating what would go into a new constitution in the next set of workshops.

By popular demand, CCIMCA extended its reach to include two barrios not previously in its program and several rural zones where it had trained women in the 1980s and 1990s. Five workshops on women's issues became the centerpiece of its training on the function of a constitution. Special forums enabled the

women to grill candidates of different political stripes running for election as delegates to the constitutional assembly. Although the full slate appeared at the Foro for only an afternoon, CCIMCA did its best to sensitize all candidates to basic inequalities, opportunities for reform and the minimum nonnegotiable set of principles the organization had developed. Out of 35 candidates appearing in Oruro, 20 were elected, among them five women, three of whom were graduates of CCIMCA's five-workshop program. Women made up 33 percent of the entire constitutional assembly and by law 27.7 percent of the delegate slots were filled by indigenous Bolivians, making for a historically diverse body.

The 16-month constitutional assembly unfolded in a sometimes tortuous manner with serious conflicts erupting in response to efforts to sabotage the proceedings. For security reasons, the assembly was moved from Sucre, Bolivia's constitutional capital, to Oruro for the final vote. As members of Coordinadora de la Mujer, another national network, CCIMCA and AMPUIE monitored deliberations on gender issues. The monitors were especially attentive to the MAS party's delegates from Oruro, who belonged to the

CCIMCA deployed Treviño's illustrations to convey the history of how the new constitution came about and to contrast the situation of women under the old constitution with the rights and protections in the new constitution.

**Before:**



*"The government did not punish discrimination."*

**After:** Article 14, Point 2



*"The government prohibits and penalizes all forms of discrimination."*

**Before:**



*"No salary, no schedule, no recognition."*

**After:** Article 336



*"The government recognizes work in the home."*

**Before:**



*"Women did not receive the same pay as a man for the same work."*

**After:** Article 48, Point 5



*"The government will promote the inclusion of women in the workforce, and guarantee equal pay for men and women."*



assembly's majority. To keep up the pressure, CCIMCA sent a committee to interview them, record their promises and even made them agree in writing to adhere to the gender agenda. The final product of this long and profoundly democratic process was a draft document containing 33 articles referring directly or indirectly to each concern in the complete list compiled by the activists in the Coordinadora de la Mujer. Evelyn Barrón still shakes her head in amazement at this success. "Frankly, it exceeded my wildest expectations," she said. Bolivia's new constitution corrects multiple injustices discussed in CCIMCA workshops, and some of the corrections apply to men as well as women. Among other provisions, the constitution

- recognizes work in the home,
- requires equal pay and equal employment opportunity for both sexes,
- prohibits sex discrimination,
- outlaws domestic and community violence and discrimination, and
- defines property rights for *campesinas* who historically had none.

After the assembly had agreed on a draft and the Bolivian congress had approved it, the new

constitution was put to the test of a national referendum and Bolivian women entered a new phase of advocacy. During the campaign on the referendum, CCIMCA appealed to the prefecture of Oruro, the equivalent of a state government, to help publicize the new guarantees via a booklet illustrated with Treviño's work. The prefecture financed the printing of 1,000 copies for CCIMCA's distribution and several thousand more for its own distribution through government channels. German Treviño's illustrations highlighting the new constitutional commitment to equal rights were posted strategically throughout Oruro. CCIMCA and AMPUIE staff held court on street corners and staged street theater conveying the same message.

Gearing up for the next phase, CCIMCA and AMPUIE are, once again, mobilizing the grassroots in Oruro, this time to ensure the application of the new constitutional provisions. Many challenges lie ahead. As in the past, CCIMCA will rely on its workshops, trainers, its talented artist and the women they reach in the daunting task of consolidating social change.

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*Kevin Healy is IAF representative for Bolivia. Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías wrote the introduction to this article.*



## APAEB: Development in the Sertão

*All photos by Sean Sprague*

**A**ssociação dos Pequenos Agricultores do Município de Valente (APAEB) works in Brazil's poorest region, the dry interior of the *nordeste* known as o Sertão. The word means desert, hinterland or backwoods in Portuguese, but that's not how APAEB's audacious motto defines the setting. "The Sertão has everything we need,"

it insists, "if there is something lacking, we'll invent it." This would sound like hyperbole, but for APAEB's astounding success. Focused on the one abundant agricultural resource in the Sertão, the organization turned the sisal plant into the bedrock of an industrial conglomerate and a vibrant array of community institutions.



*Farmers cutting and processing sisal.*



*After running and repairing industrial dryers proved prohibitively expensive, APAEB reverted to sun-drying.*



*Sisal fibers crudely processed on local farms are made finer using the machinery in APAEB's plants.*





*Sisal for industrial use.*



*Quality control.*



*APAEB's carpet factory.*



*Adding colored patterns to sisal rugs.*



*Jose Elias Lima Lopes feeds the unused part of the sisal plant to goats that supply APAEB's dairy.*



*Lima Lopes' income increased six-fold as a result of his attendance in 20 of the courses APAEB offers sisal and goat farmers. His is one of 700 properties on which APAEB installed solar panels and he learned to collect rain water in its cistern program.*



*Testing goat milk for purity and fat content.*



*APAEB's milk products.*



*APAEB's Family Agriculture School lets students in grades five through eight alternate between home and school as they pursue their education, which should reduce migration to cities. To date, it counts more than 1,800 graduates.*



*The Brazilian government selected APAEB as the first site for its digital inclusion program providing free Internet access, computer classes, library resources and training in audio/visual production.*



*A community radio station and TV program feature documentaries on members' struggles.*



*APAEB's Casa de Cultura includes a concert hall.*

APAEB was founded in 1980 by 70 sisal farmers from Valente, Bahia, and the surrounding area, initially to gain a better bargaining position with the intermediaries who paid them so poorly. By collecting and marketing the crop themselves, they raised the price across the Sertão. Then they moved up the production chain, manually extracting the sisal fibers. The turning point came in 1984, when APAEB's executive director, Ismael Ferreira de Oliveira, whose leadership of Valente's *sisaleiros* dates back more than 30 years, won the cooperative entry into the export sector. Five years later, APAEB received an IAF grant funding study of mechanized processes and providing seed capital toward a \$2.5 million sisal processing plant. By the mid-1990s, APAEB was producing rugs and carpets. According to Ferreira, second and third IAF grants, awarded in 1996 and 1997, were crucial to the expansion of the manufacturing enterprise, giving APAEB credibility with banks, Brazilian agencies, other aid programs and foundations. Catholic organizations also contributed, which is not surprising given APAEB's origins in the Movimento de Organização Comunitária, an outgrowth of the liberation theology movement

(and also an IAF grantee). Now APAEB is essentially self-supporting.

"Have your head in the clouds, but your feet on the ground," is Ferreira's explanation of how APAEB pulled all this off. A farmer's son who spends most of his time on the factory floor, he has won acclaim as the group's mastermind. In 2001 Schwab Foundation of Switzerland named him social entrepreneur of the year and some 10 years earlier he was honored as an Ashoka Fellow. APAEB's various productive and social enterprises are impressive due to their sheer diversity and their aggregate impact on Valente's approximately 20,000 residents. More than 650 *sisaleiros* make up the organization today, and 5,000 families benefit from the income generated. In most small towns in Northeast Brazil, the municipal government is the only source of jobs, but in Valente APAEB is central to the economy and its influence spills over into 19 other municipalities with some 450,000 inhabitants. In a nutshell, proximity to Valente means higher income per capita and longer life expectancy.

From its sisal exports, APAEB grosses between \$5 million and \$10 million a year, depending on the exchange rate. Profits pay farmers and are invested

*A sports complex offers nordestino farmers and their families leisure opportunities such as swimming, soccer, capoeira and live music shows.*



in a vast infrastructure that includes a supermarket, a radio station (Valente FM) and a credit union sufficiently successful to help APAEB leverage a bank loan for 75 percent of the funds needed to construct its first plant 20 years ago. (The farmers themselves mobilized 5 percent of the cost.) Sideline businesses speak to the coherence of a grassroots strategy that uses what is at hand. Only 5 percent of the sisal plant yields fiber, so APAEB uses the rest for goat feed, the backbone of its dairy and tannery. "With sisal, you invest 35 percent of your profits in labor to harvest the fiber," said farmer Joselito Carneiro da Cruz. "With goats, the only expense is the feed." APAEB sells its dairy products locally and distributes them as part of the Brazilian government's Fome Zero program.

Participating in the global economy includes its turbulence, and the worldwide economic downturn has affected the carpet factory. Until 2004, 70 percent of APAEB's revenues from rugs and carpets was attributable to exports. But the devaluation of the dollar since then has made its products expensive. To adjust, APAEB downsized the factory's workforce, cutting a 24/7 work day to two shifts, and it took out loans. Alert to yet another resource at hand, the Brazilian

market, it rerouted its carpet production, selling directly to consumers in the North and Northeast and through multiple outlets in every major city in the South and Southeast. Last year APAEB's research and development, funded by the government of Bahia, intensified its focus on domestic consumption and the growing competition from China. In 2007, Fundação APAEB was created to manage the community programs and raise funds to close the resource gap.

These new challenges can't obscure that a determined and resourceful group of *sisaleiros* beat a stifling, exploitive system, defying history, geography, climate and conventional wisdom. In the 1980s, French director Jacques Hubschman exposed their reality in his documentary *Os sisaleiros*. Last year, he returned with colleague Claire Sarazin to celebrate APAEB's accomplishments in a new film, *Miracle au sertão?* We celebrate them here with these scenes from a story that we will never tire of telling.

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*Sean Sprague is a professional photographer residing in Wales. Judith Morrison, IAF regional director for South America and the Caribbean, and Juliana Menucci, IAF's liaison services contractor in Brazil, contributed to the text.*





## The Grassroots Post-War: El Salvador

By Kathryn Smith Pyle

Photos by Kathryn Smith Pyle

The brutal regimes and armed insurrections that gripped much of Latin America when the Inter-American Foundation was opening its doors continued as the backdrop for the IAF's work into the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Created as an alternative to traditional foreign assistance, the IAF was challenged to bypass governments and channel official aid directly to the organized poor. But across the region repressive governments targeted the very community organizers whose efforts with grassroots groups IAF was mandated to support. *The Washington Post* referred to the abuses that ensued in Chile after the assassination of President Salvador Allende as

creating "a climate of fear and intimidation that would remain for years to come." In fact, fear and intimidation were everywhere during that era.

And yet, despite the danger, the period was a crucible for civil society. Labor unions were already on the scene; farmers' cooperatives and human rights groups emerged; church members, environmentalists, indigenous peoples and women organized. The growth meant opportunities even if grantmaking was not easy. "Everything was in the shadow of the dictatorship," Carl Swartz said of Chile where he was IAF's representative in the mid-1970s, but he could have been describing many countries. "We had to

figure out what was politically feasible. It was tricky, but working at the grassroots made it possible to find solid projects, mainly small-scale economic initiatives.” Between 1971, when the IAF awarded its first grant, and 1983, when the election of the late Raúl Alfonsín as president of Argentina signalled a democratic turn-around for the region, IAF’s support for grassroots projects totalled \$171.3 million.

As dictators fell or retreated and armed conflict ebbed with the end of the Cold War, democracy and the rule of law were restored. By the mid-1990s, the IAF could apply its grassroots approach in a more normal context, but one that might be accurately called post-war rather than peace, as the legacy of those earlier years was still unfolding. People still want justice, and stability requires closure, even now, long after the conflicts have ended. But the process is complicated. Consider Argentina after the return to civilian rule. Early on, senior military officers charged with torture and murder were tried and convicted. But further trials were blocked, “impunity laws” enacted and eventually the convictions were set aside. Recently, these laws were repealed and cases reopened. Political will was important, but at least some of the credit for the prosecutions underway should go to civil society, most notably the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo who formed during the “dirty war” and still march every Thursday.

### **El Salvador, at war and post-war**

While Argentina was in what would be the final years of military rule, El Salvador became a battleground. Most timelines of its civil war begin in 1980 with the consolidation of the military government, the development of the Farabundi Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) into an armed adversary, and a stunning round of assassinations whose victims included Monsignor Oscar Romero, political leaders of the opposition and four U.S. churchwomen. In 1981, the FMLN, a coalition of five guerrilla

groups, launched the first major military offensive of the conflict with its coordinated attack across El Salvador. The more than 150 documented massacres that took place over the next 11 years were part of a concerted strategy to eliminate support for the guerrillas; the dead totalled 75,000, the majority unarmed civilians killed by military and paramilitary forces. The IAF worked in El Salvador throughout the hostilities. Although some years it barely managed to fund, by 1992, its investment there totalled 71 grants worth \$7.7 million, mainly for agricultural initiatives and loan programs.

The Peace Accords of 1992 ended hostilities, imposing civilian control on security forces and guaranteeing the FMLN’s transition to a political party. But a decade later, I, as the IAF representative in El Salvador, was struck by how present the conflict still was and the many organizations engaged with the consequences. This continues, partly due to what the peace process left unfinished: a truth commission documented human rights abuses but an amnesty law took effect immediately after its report was issued; the forum for economic and social Consultation created to address poverty and labor rights disbanded within a year. Groups that had drawn international



*A commemoration of the 1992 Peace Accords. The sign says, “There is no peace without stable employment.”*

attention to abuses during the war still search for the disappeared and demand justice and new groups have emerged, including IAF grantee Asociación Pro-Búsqueda that reunites missing children (now young adults) with family members and offers them educational opportunities. The current economy provides few alternatives to emigration or conscription into the traffic in arms, drugs and people that has sent the homicide rate soaring. This article tells how representative IAF grantees are working toward economic development and the elusive goal of reconciliation.

### **Guerrillas: resettlement and renewal**

Fundación Salvadoreña para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo (REDES) was founded in 1989 by the Resistencia Nacional, one of the five armed groups in the guerrilla coalition, to help with the transition to peace that seemed to be underway. “Each FMLN group formed a similar organization,” explained José Francisco Rodríguez, program coordinator. “We all lacked a long- or even medium-term vision; we were consumed with the immediate reconstruction of the country.” Though each band organized for its own benefit, all ended up aiding the larger displaced population, including ex-soldiers (veterans of the Salvadoran army). “The ex-combatants’ principal concern,” continued Rodríguez, “regardless of what side they’d fought on, was integrating themselves back into society—acquiring the skills, finding work. Unfortunately, the government offered very limited job training and credit. And there had been so much destruction. Most people drifted back to their hometowns but many had been destroyed. We all started building houses for resettlement, but soon branched out to address other issues.”

REDES’ first funding, toward developing an organizational structure and resettling supporters, came from European churches, governments and sister cities and from U.S.-based groups offering humanitarian assistance. International donors selected REDES and other organizations to coordinate the Salvadoran government’s transfer of land from large holders to former combatants per the Peace Accords. More NGOs emerged to help, and government offices, including a credit bank, were established to support the transfers. By 1994, NGOs in El Salvador had burgeoned to 500, an indication of the vast

need and the availability of funds. “NGOs began to see themselves as part of the political context,” said Rodríguez, “rather than community-development branches of former armed groups. They got involved in policy and advocated for democracy.” The institutional focus also shifted. REDES, for example, has its own economic and social programs in 32 municipalities, but it also collaborates in networks addressing the risks of natural disasters and the rights of migrants abroad. “We consider alliances fundamental to strengthening democracy,” said Rodríguez. “And we see contributing to democracy as in our interest.”

With funding from the IAF, REDES is testing a development approach involving expatriates in the U.S. The war had caused a mass exodus of Salvadorans, and many fled north. Most of the estimated 2 million in the United States reside and work here legally under the Temporary Protected Status program that restricts deportation back to countries at war or hit by natural disasters. Money that these Salvadorans and more recent arrivals send home is estimated to constitute 18 percent of the Salvadoran economy. Some Salvadorans in the U.S. have formed hometown associations (HTAs) that underwrite small infrastructure projects in their communities of origin, but usually without consulting much those left behind. REDES’ pilot is an attempt to support small businesses, particularly those started by young entrepreneurs, by tapping into both HTA contributions *and* into remittances that families receive. The project involves planning and negotiation with HTAs, their constituent groups in El Salvador, youth associations, municipal governments and Asociaciones de Desarrollo Comunal (ADESCOS), committees that transmit neighborhood priorities to the local government. It provides young people training and technical assistance and educates families and HTAs in participation. To date, mid-project, the participating groups are supporting four micro-enterprises.

“The NGOs were founded by ex-guerrillas to bring people back and house and feed them,” said Rolando González of REDES’ staff. “Now they are leading community development, without much government support, helping people learn small-business skills, access credit, become educated—to give them an alternative to migrating. If your definition of



*Juan Luna, project director with Asociación Mangle, at a farm diversified and improved using organic methods.*

‘peace’ is the absence of war, then the Peace Accords were a success. But if you define peace as including economic development—in fact a stated aim of the Accords—then there is a long way to go.” To the extent it can, this sector of Salvadoran civil society, including REDES with its budget of \$1.4 million, pursues that aim.

### **Refugees and repatriation**

Asociación Local Mangle para la Prevención de Desastres y El Desarrollo en el Bajo Lempa-Bahía de Jiquilisco (Asociación Mangle) works in Usulután on the Pacific Coast. Nearly all 3,500 families in the semi-rural area known as Bajo Lempa arrived after 1992. They were drawn from both sides of the conflict and from four of the five groups comprising the FMLN. Their resettlement laid the groundwork for years of continued violence. Conflicts were serious, even among the families of the ex-guerrillas, as each FMLN group had its own structure, ideology and ideas about development. According to Juan Joaquín

Luna of Asociación Mangle, rather than improve the economy, \$20 million in aid from the European Union only intensified rivalries—among groups of ex-soldiers, ex-guerrillas and followers of different religions. When the funds dried up, resentment persisted. Highway crime escalated; residents despaired at the tattoos that signaled affiliation with gangs that had arrived to recruit their sons. Businesses asked the government to declare Bajo Lempa a military zone.

Least prepared for resettlement were refugees who had been scattered throughout El Salvador. In contrast, those repatriated as a cohesive unit from some of the highly organized camps in Panama, Nicaragua, Cuba or Honduras had benefited from schools, adult literacy programs, health posts, job training and social activities. But everyone resettling Bajo Lempa contended with poor land and a relentless cycle of drought and flooding. After a particularly severe flood in 1996, residents acknowledged a common problem: constant inundation endangered lives, isolated settlements and destroyed crops. To address



*Farmer trained in organic agriculture  
by Asociación Mangle.*

this, the 84 communities formed the Coordinadora del Bajo Lempa and drafted a plan in which disaster-prevention became the first step toward transforming agriculture, recovering the environment and developing better housing, education and health services. Asociación Mangle was formed in 1998 as the Coordinadora's fundraising and management arm.

The focus on flooding led to government assistance with an early-warning system. "We put together a plan for evacuation and food distribution that would reach the small communities, where often the roads were impassable. And we addressed the need for reconstruction after the floods and droughts," said Luna. But the appeal for government support for economic development based on organic agriculture in the Bajo Lempa was denied. "They said 'There are too many armed men; you can't develop them, you just have to control them,'" Luna recalled. "The government wanted to revive plantations of cotton and sugarcane, monocultures that had failed and would fail again."

In fall 1998, Hurricane Mitch hit Central America. Damage in El Salvador was estimated at \$400 million; deaths totaled 240. But no lives were lost in the Bajo Lempa, where communities had been prepared. When the Spanish government and the Inter-American Development Bank selected Asociación Mangle to manage recovery funds, the NGO seized the opportunity to put the longer-term plan into action, building a training center and hiring technicians to introduce organic farming. With funds from the IAF, Asociación Mangle expanded its training to 150 farmers and extended loans for their materials and inputs. The grant also financed the irrigation systems, hedge fences, trenches and fruit trees required, and they help mitigate the effects of both droughts and flooding. With IAF's support, Asociación Mangle partnered with local mayors to develop a rotating market that its youth-run radio station promoted. Women have learned to plant "kitchen" gardens for home consumption and to process cashews for sale. Families receive assistance with launching businesses stocked with their excess produce.

Asociación Mangle's dynamic grassroots program offers poor people in Bajo Lempa a striking alternative to employment as plantation labor. While focused on economic development, the grantee also worked on the immediate threats to social stability, using mediation to defuse some of the violence and a tattoo-removal program to help young men leave gangs and find employment. These measures, along with disaster-preparedness and organic agriculture, have enabled the area's diverse communities to rally around common goals. For the hundred or so families the NGO reaches, the promise of the Peace Accords has begun to be fulfilled.

### **The importance of memory**

Now Asociación Mangle is tapping into an important element in reconciliation—memory. Memory is essential to peace. It legitimizes experience, even in the face of official denial, and can be the substance of a common bond. Throughout El Salvador, many communities have erected memorials to victims of the war and commemorations recall the events and honor the dead. But, other than military histories by ex-combatants and testimony on human rights abuses, few sources of information on the period are

accessible to rural communities and schoolchildren. Primary sources, such as letters from combatants to their families, diaries and other personal accounts, have yet to appear in print. Young people in Asociación Mangle's new "Patrimonio Cultural" project are helping to fill this void by interviewing neighbors on the traditions, food, customs and "precious places" in the areas they called home before the war. They will also collect information for a book on local history, including on the massacre in La Quesera, in northern Bajo Lempa, where a monument now honors victims.

Another IAF grantee, El Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen [the Museum of Word and Image] (MUPI), connects Salvadorans with their heritage through its collections of photos, films, newspaper accounts, radio broadcasts and other records of the civil war as well as works by artists and writers concerned with social reform. Its extensive documentation of an indigenous Mayan community in Sonsonate that was nearly annihilated in 1932 includes the revival of basket-weaving. In cooperation with public schools,

MUPI organizes workshops and seminars and tours exhibits. It publishes a magazine and books, most recently, an illustrated history of El Salvador's natural disasters that is also a manual for mobilization. Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, MUPI director, explained the mission: "The events of the war, this indigenous history, the lives of these cultural figures, the effects of earthquakes and hurricanes—these aren't taught or reported but they continue to shape Salvadoran identity. Particularly our young people need to know who they are so they can choose to not migrate, to stay here and take part in rebuilding. Historic memory builds the commitment necessary for the hard work of civic and political participation."

Juan Ayala's memories are entwined with recent history and with the role of civil society. He works for IAF grantee Asociación de Desarrollo Económico y Social Santa Marta (ADESSM), founded in 1992 to assist in resettlement. He was seven in 1983 when his family arrived at Mesa Grande, one of the largest refugee camps in Honduras, where 30,000 Salvadorans spent the war years in primitive conditions but with



*With support from the IAF Centro Arte Para la Paz [Art Center for Peace], a museum complex constructed on the grounds of a former convent in Suchitoto, trains young people in video and radio production to prepare them for employment and to document the region's history.*

a remarkable level of organization. Those who returned to El Salvador in 1987 and settled Santa Marta, a rural area close to the Honduran border, brought with them a vision they had begun to develop before they became refugees, through literacy classes using Paulo Freire's methodology. They believed that education was the way out of poverty. "I was 16 when we returned, and I'd had more schooling than any of the adults; along with other teenagers, I was assigned to be a teacher in the school we set up, when Santa Marta was still a conflict zone," said Ayala.

The school wasn't officially recognized until the end of the war; it would be another 10 years before the teachers were certified. Now it is part of the Salvadoran system, but Santa Marta still staffs it with alumni. More than 900 students, from kindergarten through high school, bustle about the complex that boasts a computer lab and is connected to the Internet via satellite dish. Its 40 graduates are enrolled in various universities. "Through education, people can create jobs and manage economic development projects. Our young people already operate a radio station and a Web site," added Vicente Tatay, also on ADESSM's staff. With IAF funding, ADESSM is helping

100 farm families with production and marketing. "We ended the armed struggle, but now we're fighting poverty with ideas and knowledge," said Ayala.

In El Salvador, development at the grassroots is as broad a concept as peace-building. "There was the war, and then there was the post-war," commented Aristides Valencia, a former director of Asociación Mangle. Recently elected to the Salvadoran National Assembly, Valencia is one of several alumni of IAF-funded projects who have graduated from civil society to public office. The skills and knowledge acquired from directing NGOs prepare them well to address the legacy of the war as public officials and work with civil society in an evolving process that embraces the past while preparing for the future. Said Valencia, "We are still in the post-war, building a distinct process of development based on participation and inclusion. It's not easy, but it's the only way to resolve the conflicts that began the war and are still holding us back."

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*From 2001 to 2007, Kathryn Smith Pyle was IAF representative for El Salvador. She is currently producing a documentary about children who disappeared during the Salvadoran war.*



MUPI civil war exhibit.

Seth Jesse

# Award for Preserving Memory

Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, director of 2007 IAF grantee Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (MUPI) in San Salvador, was honored with an award from the Prince Claus Fund of the Netherlands for “his commitment to the promotion of memory and its active role in the reconstruction of Salvadoran society.” Ambassador Matthijs van Bonzel presented the award to Consalvi at the Museo de Arte Moderno de El Salvador on Jan. 29, 2009.

A native of Venezuela, Consalvi moved to El Salvador in 1980, at the outset of the armed conflict that lasted until 1992. He founded the clandestine Radio Venceremos whose broadcasts served as a primary vehicle for expressing opposition to El Salvador’s repressive military government. He has written about his experiences as a journalist during that time and about the devastating impact of the civil war, including in the books *La Terquedad del Izote* (1992) and *Luciérnagas en El Mozote* (1996).

Consalvi founded MUPI as a repository for the historical documentation he and his staff began collecting after the war ended. The museum houses films, recordings, art, publications and more than 35,000 images dating from 1872. It had a busy year in 2008. In addition to curating new exhibits and archiving documents, MUPI launched the magazine *Trasmallo*, the book *1932: Rebelión en la Oscuridad* and an educational game for children. The Salvadoran daily *La Prensa Gráfica* of Oct. 4, 2008, reported that Consalvi was attending the First Congress on Ibero-American Culture in Mexico City, where he shared his

experience making the documentary *1932, Cicatriz de la Memoria* about the indigenous uprising and the government’s violent response that claimed the lives of at least 10,000 Salvadorans.

MUPI brings residents of isolated and poor communities its interactive exhibits, films and lectures and solicits their ideas and personal histories to enhance the offerings and stimulate a sense of pride in a shared past. “We believe that it is extremely important to reinforce a sense of civic responsibility, strengthen a sense of belonging among youths and make cultural spaces available to them to reflect on historical memory,” said Consalvi. He is optimistic about the victory of FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes in the recent presidential election. This change in the party in power, he commented, has “created what we can call the beginning of the end of the post-war era and entry into an era of democratic maturity.”—Seth Jesse, IAF representative



Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, known as Santiago during the civil war, with an exhibit of crafts indigenous to a community in Sonsonate descended from the southernmost Mayan settlement.

## Rolex Award to Zaldivar

As one of 10 winners of the 2009 Rolex Award for Enterprise, Elsa Zaldivar, director of IAF 2008 Paraguayan grantee Base Educación, Comunicación y Tecnología Alternativa (BASE ECTA), beat out more than 1,500 candidates from 127 countries. The Swiss manufacturer of luxury watches sponsors the biennial competition to promote originality in science, technology, exploration, the environment and cultural heritage.

Zaldivar's innovation evolved from work begun in the early 1990s with 200 poor rural women who formed a cooperative marketing sponges made from loofah, a vine that grows easily in the tropics. The venture was a success—even men who had scoffed at this “women's thing” were impressed—but Zaldivar remained dissatisfied because two-thirds of the raw loofah harvested was too inferior for sponges or was wasted in the manufacturing process.

Eventually Zaldivar developed the idea of combining the leftover loofah with discarded plastics and corn husks to make a low-cost composite material for use in construction. In addition to its flexibility, light weight and insulating qualities, this substitute for wood offers obvious benefits to the environment, especially already-endangered Paraguayan forests. Next up for Zaldivar is figuring out how to invest in Base Ecta the \$100,000 that accompanies the Rolex award (along with a Rolex watch). Base Ecta is using its IAF grant to fund grassroots groups undertaking development initiatives. For more on the Rolex award and Zaldivar, visit [rolexawards.com/en/index.jsp](http://rolexawards.com/en/index.jsp).

## Cinéma Haïti

BBC Radio World Service's *The Strand* highlighted in its March broadcasts IAF 2009 grantee Fondation Festival Film Jakmèl (FFFJ) which just launched a brand-new film school, Haiti's first. Students are currently working with Oscar-nominated documentary director Jonathan Stack on a film about carnival in Jacmel (population 40,000), considered Haiti's cultural capital because of its crafts and colonial architecture. FFFJ's festival celebrating world cinema, which preceded the school, attracts 80,000 moviegoers and generates more than \$1.5 million.



With its IAF grant, FFFJ hopes to reach some 5,000 high school students in Jacmel and Port-au-Prince with beginning and advanced classes in film-making and video technology and with discussions of human rights, gender roles, poverty, the environment and political violence as portrayed on film. Its staff hopes these activities will be incorporated into school curricula throughout Haiti and might help develop a home-grown film industry.

In May, the French Institute Alliance Française of New York City invited FFFJ to participate in its annual month-long World Nomads event exploring trans-culturalism. This year the spotlight was on Haitian literature, music, arts and film, the latter showcasing the work of FFFJ students and developed in collaboration with Oscar-winner Jonathan Demme, director of *The Agronomist*. For more on the World Nomads, visit [fiaf.org](http://fiaf.org); on the festival, [festivalfilmjakmel.com](http://festivalfilmjakmel.com); or to hear BBC's report log onto [festivalfilmjakmel.com/audio/CI-bbc-report.html](http://festivalfilmjakmel.com/audio/CI-bbc-report.html).

## On the Gas Grid

Some 4,100 families from five neighborhoods in Greater Buenos Aires were recently connected to the natural gas grid, thanks to their work with IAF grantee Fundación Pro Vivienda Social (FPVS), according to the April 20, 2009, edition of *La Nación*, a leading Argentine daily. For three decades, these residents purchased gas by the tank for their stoves and water heaters, which was five to 10 times more expensive than the grid and left them vulnerable to running out at inopportune times. “We can now save money and time and I can take a bath without worrying that the tank will run out,” resident Omar Armenia told *La Nación*. “No one thought this possible as we had been promised a connection to the grid before.” IAF’s grant to FPVS supports its work organizing neighbors by block to manage group loans for housing and infrastructure improvements. For more on FPVS, visit [fpvs.org](http://fpvs.org).

## Celebrating Chocolate

As in 2008, the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., marked Valentine’s Day 2009 with



a celebration of chocolate and its Native American origins. Former IAF grantee El Ceibo, a federation of 40 Bolivian cooperatives, was invited to reprise its role at the center of “The Power of Chocolate” exhibit, Feb. 14-15. Some 20,000 visitors, many of whom had never laid eyes on a cacao pod, learned the secrets of chocolate from four indigenous Aymara farmers from the Alto Beni, the tropical Amazonian region where some of the world’s finest cacao is grown.

El Ceibo was featured in the March 31, 2009, Bolivian daily *La Razón* for its role in setting the high standards for cacao production that the Bolivian government is adopting as norms for the industry. Currently El Ceibo is comprised of some 1,200 farmers who produce 60 percent of Bolivia’s cacao; it exports more than 600 metric tons of beans, cacao products and chocolate to Europe, Japan and the United States. For more on El Ceibo or the exhibit, visit [nmai.si.edu/chocolate/2009/index.html](http://nmai.si.edu/chocolate/2009/index.html).

## Human Rights Award

Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI), a partner of IAF Peruvian grantee Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), received the American Psychiatric Association’s 2009 Human Rights Award. Since 1990, this award has recognized efforts to prevent human rights abuses and their psychiatric consequences, and to help victims recover. Past recipients include former president Jimmy Carter and the late U.S. senator Paul Wellstone.

The United Nations recently made a film highlighting MDRI’s success in freeing a young autistic Paraguayan from the cage in which a psychiatric facility was keeping him.

APRODEH uses its IAF grant to assist some 520 individuals with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities, and their families, in forming a national network that will advocate for their needs. For more on MDRI or APRODEH visit: [mdri.org](http://mdri.org) or [aprodeh.org.pe](http://aprodeh.org.pe).

## Afro-Paraguayans

José Carlos Medina, coordinator for IAF 2006 grantee Asociación Paraguaya Kamba Cua (AAPKC), was interviewed in the January 2009 *Joparé* (alliance in Guaraní), the newsletter of the United Nations

## Taxis for the Disabled

Taxi Solidario, a Quito-based program of IAF 2008 grantee Gestión Ecuador (GE) that serves Ecuadorians with disabilities, was featured in the Dec. 10, 2008 *El Telégrafo*, a Guayaquil daily. GE partners with various organizations and taxi cooperatives to address the transportation needs of the disabled, estimated at some 13 percent of Ecuadorians.

To participate, drivers attend training in how to accommodate this clientele and must offer discounts to disabled passengers. “Not only are we offering a social service, but our members are learning about respect and how to treat others and become better individuals and better workers,” Luis Mejía of the Pichincha Taxi Union told *El Telégrafo*. Like-minded volunteers, who number 600, have helped ferry people to medical appointments, physical therapy, destinations for errands and to the polls during last September’s election. With IAF’s support, GE is expanding its program to Guayaquil, Cuenca and Tulcán. In February it signed an agreement with USAID to develop, for 11 municipalities, evacuation plans incorporating the needs of people with disabilities during natural disasters. For more on GE, visit [gestionecuador.org](http://gestionecuador.org).



Mark Calcedo

Jorge López of Taxi Solidario displays the international logo symbolizing access.

Population Fund (UNFPA), an agency that assists governments in collecting and analyzing population data. Supported by the IAF and Paraguay’s National Directorate for Statistics, AAPKC conducted a census in three communities and counted 7,600 African descendants. (See *Grassroots Development* 2007.) This population, which, along with its culture, has been overlooked, Medina said, wants to be recognized officially as a Paraguayan minority and wants its contributions acknowledged in school textbooks. For the interview, visit [unfpa.org.py](http://unfpa.org.py).

## Farming Oysters

Divers from La Entrada, Ecuador, are addressing the dwindling population of commercial-sized oysters by farming the mollusks in cages, according to an October news feature telecast on *Ecuavisa*, a channel that reaches a nationwide audience. Support for

the effort comes from Ecuador’s Centro Nacional de Agricultura e Investigaciones Marinas and Fundación Nobis, which has been funding such programs via a cooperative agreement with the IAF since 2003. Farming can potentially produce more than 7,000 oysters a month. It can also help divers avoid damage to their lungs caused by spending extended periods submerged, according to diver Wilmer Tumbaco.

Fundación Nobis, the philanthropic arm of an Ecuadorian conglomerate, is a member of RedEAmérica, an IAF-initiated network of corporate foundations committed to grassroots development. Under its agreement, Nobis matches the IAF’s contribution. In La Entrada, funds are disbursed to grassroots groups for family vegetable gardens, early education programs, a health clinic, a microcredit fund, a community center and training for artisans. For more on RedEAmérica, visit [redeamerica.org](http://redeamerica.org).



Darío Elías



Villa del Chanco, above, and Silvia Acosta, future homeowner in Covinus.

## Dream Homes

Uruguayan IAF grantee Una Casa Un Sueño (UCUS) was founded eight years ago, when a group of mothers of children attending Stella Maris, a private school in Montevideo, decided to help improve the academic performance of students from the de la Cruz neighborhood in Carrasco. From the outset, they understood that they could not ignore the poverty, hunger, cold and other privations that conspired against the goal. So UCUS focused on decent housing that the families would help each other construct. But UCUS doesn't just build houses, according to Claudia Raveca, its director; it builds sustainable communities. Its first such success, dubbed "La Cruz de Carrasco," was followed by others.

One of the newest is Cooperativa de Vivienda No Solo Un Sueño (COVINUS), where, with its IAF

funding, UCUS helped resettle 30 families after the municipality condemned the trash dump where they used to live. *Grassroots Development* visited COVINUS, but, on the way, we stopped at the insect- and rat-infested dump that was the site of the old neighborhood, called Villa del Chanco (slum of pigs), a reference to the livestock kept there, although some residents earned their living as recyclers. It was a dangerous place. Testing revealed alarming levels of chromium, cadmium and lead in children raised there. The garbage was virtually suffocating them; animals raised in the dump represented another conduit for the contaminants.

In COVINUS, homes are under construction on lots donated by the Fundación Don Pedro and Asociación Cultural y Técnica. The municipality of Montevideo provides services and road construction and maintenance. Other partners include the Stella Maris school, the Schools of Veterinary and Social Sciences of the National University, the Uruguayan Ministry of Social Development, Christian Brothers, Fundación Viven, Fundación Logros, Asociación Techo para mi País, Old Christians Club, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters, Artigas Cement, and the embassies of Japan and Ireland, in addition to individual volunteers. According to Bertha Sanseverino of the Uruguayan Ministry of Social Development, this reflects a long national tradition of participation that the current administration encourages. "We appealed to social organizations to work with the residents," she added.

UCUS begins its renewal effort by obtaining title to the land where the community will relocate. Residents first move into temporary, prefabricated wooden structures measuring 18 square meters. This allows them to live on site, which facilitates collaboration in the construction and eliminates time and money wasted on transportation. And as one resident put it, "*El ojo del patrón engorda el ganado*," an old adage meaning that one should stay on top of his own enterprise. The residents learn to face challenges together, to organize, to assume social responsibilities. They develop their sense of community and their understanding of cooperating for mutual benefit. The concept is not new, but the results of its application are inspiring.—*Darío Elías, IAF translation supervisor*

## Sweet Jobs

Many individuals with cognitive disabilities can hold a job, but often they have not had the opportunity to learn the skills required to find employment. Angelina Merino Thayer understands this. She has worked as an occupational therapist with mentally disabled Chileans since graduating from the University of Chile in 1976. Four years ago, she founded Fundación Incluir to assist such young adults. Fundación Incluir opened its doors in August 2005 in eastern Santiago, where a real estate firm interested in the initiative provided a house rent-free. The goal of the program, which then had five participants and two instructors, was to offer training and instill in the trainees a sense of autonomy and self-respect.

Fundación Telefónica of Chile is a member of the Network of Corporate Foundations and Actions for Grassroots Development (RedEAmérica), which supports self-help projects and was launched by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) in 2002. Like other RedEAmérica members, Fundación Telefónica has entered into a cooperative agreement with the IAF, which requires that it match two-to-one every dollar contributed by the IAF to Telefónica's subgrant fund program. As a subgrantee of Fundación Telefónica, Fundación Incluir received \$18,000 toward developing a self-sufficient micro-enterprise with a comprehensive program training disabled people to bake treats such as *alfajores*, *cubinitos*, *naranjitas* and cookies. Fundación Incluir used its IAF-Telefónica funds to buy special stoves and stools and to test the products for nutritional content, a requirement to be licensed to sell. Profits from initial sales covered the ingredients in the baked goods and a token payment for student workers.

The 18-month program now has 41 participants, 60 percent of whom have

Down syndrome. The minimum age for participation is 16. The professional staff includes foundation director Thayer, two confectionery experts, two handicraft instructors and a computer programmer as well as part-time teachers of art, music, dance and painting. Program graduates who can't find employment can work indefinitely in the confectionery shop and grow with it. The training served Marcos Agurto well. After just a year in the program, he found a part-time job as a stock clerk in LIDER, a supermarket, which allowed him enough free time in the afternoon to pursue art classes at Fundación Incluir.

The enterprise has steadily generated sales; they fell off only when it was closed for the Independence



*Student bakers  
Arturo Jaramiz and  
John McDonald.*

Miguel Cuevas



Day celebrations. Quality is a big factor in this success. The sweets measure up to the standards of Santiago's Marriott Hotel and LAN-Chile and will soon be stocked in LIDER's gourmet section. However, continued revenue growth is a challenge. Student workers cannot put in longer hours or otherwise increase their productivity. Fundación Incluir has eight individuals wait-listed, but increasing its enrollment would require a larger space. A goal for 2009 is the acquisition of a facility to accommodate expansion.

The nominal fees most parents pay for the program represent only a small source of revenue (30 percent of the participants are on scholarship). Fundación Incluir is soliciting support from corporate donors, its employees and the public. More than 700 people attend its annual event that raises funds for scholarships, program improvements and the eventual larger facility. Students and their instructors clean the facilities and garden; new hires subsidize the institution by foregoing compensation during their first year.

In its brochure, Fundación Incluir says it will "join forces with everyone who wants to participate in real social change assuring that the most vulnerable individuals have a real chance for inclusion." Much remains to be done, but the confectionery shop represents a big step forward. The young people feel useful and their parents know the children are learning skills that will lead to inclusion in Chilean life.—*Miguel Cuevas, analysis and evaluation specialist*

## Global Rights at the OAS

Discrimination affects the more than 190 million individuals of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. They are inadequately represented in government, lack access to education, social security and employment, and suffer disproportionately from poverty. They are frequently at a disadvantage in the justice system.

Global Rights is a nongovernmental organization that has been fighting race-based and other discrimination since 1978. Three decades ago, we began litigating before the Inter-American Court and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. More recently, our advocacy has extended into other OAS bodies,

including the Summit of the Americas that brings together the hemisphere's heads of state every four years. The Summit culminates in the adoption of a Declaration and Plan of Action addressing certain issues. The OAS Secretariat for the Summit Process monitors progress toward the goals of the mandates and commitments expressed in these documents; it has welcomed civil society groups such as ours as fundamental to this effort.

With support from the Inter-American Foundation, the Summit Secretariat and the government of Argentina, Global Rights and the Afro-Costa Rican Women's Center organized the first Inter-American Forum of Afro-descendent Peoples in San José to prepare for the 2005 Summit held in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Our purpose was to inform participants about the OAS and the Summit and to ensure that the Declaration reflected their concerns. Our efforts paid off. The Declaration and the Plan of Action explicitly condemned racism, confirmed the right of African descendants to education and employment opportunities, and called for the creation of a task force charged with drafting the Inter-American Convention against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance.

Since 2005, with IAF's ongoing support, Global Rights and our Latin American colleagues have tracked compliance with the goals of the Summit at different "sub-regional" events in Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Panama and the Dominican Republic. We have found that, unfortunately, few government officials understand the process or how to work with civil society. Most seriously, we continue to face the denial of the existence of racial discrimination and its consequences. Nonetheless we can report some progress: African descendent organizations registered with the OAS now total 14; the African descendent presence in OAS bodies has grown; issues important to African descendants are now on the Inter-American agenda.

At the 2009 Summit held in Trinidad and Tobago, Global Rights and its colleagues contributed language to the Declaration of Commitments drafted by the host country. The final document reaffirmed the need to continue fighting racial discrimination and for a convention.—*Carlos Quesada, director, Latin American Program, Global Rights*

## Report: The IAF in Brazil

Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) recently issued the findings of its study of eight Brazilian organizations awarded IAF grants between 1976 and 2004 and their impact on government policy and social inclusion.

When the IAF began working in Brazil, GDP was growing at an impressive 7 percent annually. Because few Brazilians shared in the gains, the result was glaring inequality in income distribution, particularly as it correlated to race, a phenomenon barely acknowledged in Brazil. IAF's program was, in fact, interrupted for a period that lasted from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, ostensibly because the projects the IAF funded were not needed.

Before and after the interruption, the IAF notably invested in organizations working to put social justice on the agenda. As one of many international donors supporting these institutions, the IAF offered them flexible arrangements for funding core programs and training in advocacy skills that advanced their influence. FGV's study included CEBRAP, founded as a refuge for teachers and researchers "retired" by the military regime; Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas (IBASE), a think-tank headed by the passionate advocate of the destitute and disadvantaged Herbert de Souza, known as Betinho; Centro Josué de Castro, which also raised awareness with its research into social conditions; and Ação Educativa, which worked to improve educational practices. FGV reported that the work of CEBRAP, IBASE and Centro Josué de Castro influenced the Lula government's Bolsa Familia program (see page 74). Ação Educativa institutionalized new practices and developed material tailored for adult education that was adopted by the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

FGV found that after elections and a new Constitution opened space for NGOs kept at bay by the military regime, the IAF focused more on poverty reduction and social inclusion. Grantee União Nordestina de Assistência a Pequenas Organizações in Pernambuco was a pioneer in microcredit (see page

73). Grantee Instituição Comunitária de Crédito—Portosol, in Rio Grande do Sul, not only delivered affordable loans to the poor but devised management tools that were adopted and disseminated by BNDES (Brazil's development bank). The IAF's support also ensured civil society's contribution to the current regulatory framework for microcredit. Sociedade para Reabilitação e Reintegração do Incapacitado (SORRI), which received a grant in 1990 to work with the disabled and research laws and services affecting them, played a role in the passage of relevant labor legislation in 1999. Instituto Palmares de Direitos Humanos, an incubator for enterprises launched by African-Brazilians, received a grant in 2004. Its leader Giovanni Harvey was appointed undersecretary for affirmative action in Brazil's Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality and works with civil society to develop policy. "Government machinery does not generate social innovation because it is a technocracy. But it can and it should identify strategic leaders," he told FGV.

With regard to discrimination and income distribution, FGV reported progress. Since 2001, Brazilians increasingly identify as of African descent. As a result, the African-descendent portion of Brazil's population "grew" by almost 6 percent a year between 2002 and 2007. Race is still a factor in poverty, however; a white Brazilian is less likely to be poor than an African-Brazilian. Beginning in 2001, the disparity in income distribution began to improve, but it still jeopardizes prospects for a more equitable society.

FGV's report concludes that, beyond its impact on its grantees and their direct beneficiaries themselves, the IAF's support enabled Brazilian civil society to voice the needs of the marginalized and influence the domestic agenda, laws and development. Civil society's continued influence on policy is paramount to further progress. For the full study, visit [www.fgv.br/cps/iafbrazil](http://www.fgv.br/cps/iafbrazil).—*Marcelo Neri, director, and Ana Beatriz Andari, researcher, Center for Social Policies, Brazilian Institute for Economics, Fundação Getúlio Vargas*



**Microcrédito—O Mistério  
Nordestino e o Grameen  
Brasileiro**

*[Microcredit—The  
Northeastern Mystery and the  
Brazilian Grameen]*

*By Marcelo Neri et al*

*Fundação Getúlio Vargas: Rio  
de Janeiro, 2008*

*Available in Portuguese*

While microcredit's role in reducing poverty is widely recognized, many remain unconvinced. For the skeptics, the hard data is missing, especially on whether microentrepreneurs, particularly women, invest business profits in healthcare and education for their children. In *Microcrédito—O Mistério Nordeste e o Grameen Brasileiro*, principal author Marcelo Neri and his colleagues make an important contribution to this debate by analyzing the CrediAmigo program developed in 1998 by the Banco do Nordeste do Brasil. Neri, who holds a Ph.D. in economics from Princeton University, directs the Center for Social Policies of the Brazilian Institute for Economics at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, a leading educational and research institution, teaches in its graduate program and publishes regularly in Brazil and abroad.

Brazil's history with microcredit predates by a few years the Grameen Bank founded in 1976 by microcredit pioneer and 2006 Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. Projeto UNO, the first microcredit program in South America, was created in 1973 in Pernambuco with the support of Acción International and later expanded through funding from the Inter-American Foundation.

Both CrediAmigo and the Grameen Bank extend loans to groups of poor people whose only collateral is their acknowledgement that they are jointly and severally liable for repayment. The significant difference between the two entities is that the Grameen Bank operates in rural areas and CrediAmigo in cities—a reflection of demographics in Bangladesh, which is primarily rural, and Brazil, where 86 percent of the population is urban.

The reference to “Northeastern Mystery” in the title of this book is a play on the term “Brazilian mystery,” first used in 1997 by Claudio González Vega. A microfinance specialist, he questioned why the volume and quality of credit in Brazil were lower than in other countries with similar levels of income. The demand for credit in Brazil still substantially exceeds supply, but in recent years the availability of credit has expanded faster in the Brazilian Northeast than in the rest of the country. *Microcrédito* convincingly argues that CrediAmigo is the reason, solving “o mistério nordestino.” It also provides compelling evidence that CrediAmigo's clients are not only creditworthy, as reflected in their 84 percent rate of repayment, but that many—more than 60 percent—have used their loans to move out of poverty. This is an exceptional achievement by any standard.

Microcredit is usually defined as the concession of small loans to low-income entrepreneurs. Of course, like everyone else, poor people require a diverse range of financial services to safeguard and increase income, budget for consumption, build assets, run their businesses and manage risk. Microfinance is the term for the range of services encompassing loans, savings, money transfers and microinsurance. To be sure, credit is a means and not an end in itself. That is why its effects must be studied not only in terms of financial returns (the profitability and sustainability of the credit program) but also in terms of its impact—on businesses as well as individuals and their families.

Anyone who doubts the power of microcredit should read this book documenting with robust data a program that has reached almost 1 million clients over 10 years and has helped them provide for their families with dignity. It has good news for the clients and beneficiaries of such programs, for the ethical microfinance institutions that try to provide accessible and affordable services to the poor, and for the donors who invest in microcredit programs because of their social, economic and developmental impact. To explore the data further, visit [www.fgv.br/cps/crediamigo](http://www.fgv.br/cps/crediamigo), an interactive Web site accessible in Portuguese and English.—*Miriam Euclides Brandão, IAF representative*



Courtesy: Theresia Loba

## Ruth Cardoso: Anthropologist, First Lady, Social Reformer

Ruth Cardoso, a distinguished anthropologist, former first lady of Brazil and leader of IAF grantee Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (CEBRAP), died in São Paulo on June 24, 2008, after suffering a heart attack. She was 77. Over her long career as a researcher, professor, feminist, and government official, Dona Ruth, as she was affectionately known, played an important role in shaping Brazilian social policy.

In the early 1950s, Dona Ruth met Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the sociologist who later became president of Brazil, at the University of São Paulo where she eventually earned a doctorate. The couple married in 1952. Like many other intellectuals of their generation, they were forced into exile during the repressive military regime beginning in the late 1960s. While abroad, Dona Ruth studied or taught at la Maison de Sciences de L'Homme in France, the University of Chile, Columbia University in the United States and Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. Her publications included a series of influential articles and book chapters on social movements and on the complex community life in Brazil's *favelas*, or slums. She is credited with having helped introduce the study of poverty and violence into the Brazilian academic agenda.

But it was as first lady that Dona Ruth wielded the most influence, and her approach to the role has been compared to Eleanor Roosevelt's. When her husband assumed office in 1994, she abolished the ineffectual, patronage-laden Legião Brasileira de Assistência Social (LBA), a charity in which the first lady served as titular head, and replaced it with the Comunidade Solidária, a ground-breaking agency targeting poverty reduction through engagement with civil society. Over eight years, it addressed adult literacy, job training, volunteerism, and financing for small enterprises. Dona Ruth also launched the Conselho da Comunidade Solidária, made up of government ministers, NGO leaders and businessmen, which promoted dialogue on such hot-button issues as agrarian reform and the role of the third sector. The programs she pioneered benefited poor communities throughout Brazil. They also paved the way for the Bolsa Familia launched by the Lula government in 2003, a massive cash transfer program conditioned on, for example, vaccinating children and sending them to school. It serves as a safety net for some 11 million families and has significantly reduced absolute poverty.

Dona Ruth worked as a researcher with CEBRAP, a leading social science think-tank based in São Paulo, with which the IAF has been in contact since its founding in the early 1970s. Later, in the 1990s, the IAF funded CEBRAP's research on the economic integration of immigrants from the Northeast in São Paulo. As the FR for Brazil and later as an employee of the World Bank, I met with Dona Ruth on several occasions. She was always unpretentious and friendly, displaying the intellect of a seasoned academic and the resolute calm and simplicity of someone deeply committed to social change.

Dona Ruth lived through a landmark era and was well ahead of her time. When the history of this transition is written, she will be featured as a key figure who led Brazil to recognize and begin to overcome longstanding gender discrimination and social inequality. Her uninterrupted commitment to social justice was movingly captured at her funeral when a small doll crafted by one of the countless women's groups funded by Comunidade Solidária was placed in her coffin in final tribute.—*John Garrison, senior civil society specialist, the World Bank*



## Sally Watters Yudelman: IAF Vice President and Women's Advocate

Sally Watters Yudelman, the IAF's first woman vice president, died of brain cancer on Oct. 24, 2008. She was 77.

Born into wealth and blessed with beauty, Yudelman graduated from Vassar College and married young. Then life threw her one of those curve balls that freezes the batter at the plate, and she found herself divorced and unemployed with two young children to raise. She went to work for the U.S. Peace Corps where her management skills impressed Bill Dyal, then country director for Colombia. When she married Montague Yudelman, a South African economist, she accompanied him to France and taught for a while at the Université de Paris. The couple returned to the U.S. in 1972, after Dyal asked Sally to join his team at the brand new agency he was leading, the Inter-American Foundation. (Robert McNamara had offered Monty a position with the World Bank.)

Sally's IAF work established her internationally as a tireless advocate for the poor and disenfranchised, especially women. During her meteoric rise from Foundation representative to vice president, she supported grassroots groups addressing abuse, access to services and economic opportunities throughout the

hemisphere. She shared her experiences in her book *Hopeful Openings* (Kumerian Press: 1987). She left the IAF to become a senior fellow with the International Center for Research on Women. Sally later served on the boards of CARE International, the Washington Office on Latin America, the Development Center for Alternative Policies and the Center for Support of Native Lands, as well as on delegations that observed elections and the work of human rights commissions in Latin America. As a Fulbright scholar, she lectured at colleges throughout the United States.

Marion Ritchey Vance shared special times with Sally at the IAF and after hours as well as a passion for riding. "We would drive to the Virginia countryside, saddle up, and ride along the Potomac River or through forests where fireflies added a bit of magic to the twilight woods," recalled Ritchey Vance. "On the trip out, we gnashed our teeth over the crisis-du-jour at the office. By the time we put the horses up and headed home, all was as mellow as the aroma of equines munching hay. It was on those drives that I came to know, and revel in, Sally's sense of humor. She was one of the most delightful conversationalists I've known. She invented whimsical nicknames for all those close to her, especially the family she doted upon. There was a liberal sprinkling of French aphorisms and of pithy phrases to nail behaviors not quite to her liking."

"I'll always be indebted to Sally for her intellectual leadership and guidance," said Steve Vetter, formerly of the IAF and now president of Partners of the Americas. "We never had a conversation when I wasn't asked, 'So what have you been reading?' I grew accustomed to this, especially since there were so many other open, curious minds at the IAF that read and reflected on our work. I have since found what a valuable, rare gift Sally had offered all of us. I used to keep a copy of Robert Frost's poems on my desk. We had reflected on several occasions about one of my favorite entries from "Two Tramps in Mud Time" and she asked me during one of our last meetings to recite it. It goes like this, 'Only when love and need are one...is the deed ever done... for heaven and future's sake.' To this she would always add, "How lovely."

Sally, how lovely.—*Wilbur Wright, IAF representative*



## 40th Anniversary Exhibit

Photography is central to the publications of the Inter-American Foundation. Over the years our contributors have included skilled and sensitive artists whose work has eloquently documented the dignity and achievements of our grantees. This photo of Bolivian weavers from Antropólogos del Sur Andino (story on page 10) is one of 40 photos culled from our

archive of more than 12,000 for an exhibit in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the IAF's mandate to support grassroots development throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. To arrange to display this collection, contact [mcaicedo@iaf.gov](mailto:mcaicedo@iaf.gov). Upon request the IAF can provide speakers.



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